

S E R M O N S,

B Y

G. GREGORY, F.A.S. *K*

Author of ESSAYS HISTORICAL and MORAL, &c.

To which are prefixed,

THOUGHTS on the COMPOSITION
and DELIVERY of a SERMON.

In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. 1 Cor. xiv. 19.

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S. B. R. M. O. N. S.

O. C. R. E. D. I. T. A. S.



TO
HIS GRACE

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

My Lord,

IF, by the display of extensive or profound erudition, the following pages were calculated to attract the learned eye; or if, by their elegance and correctness, I might flatter myself that they could endure the delicate test of critical discernment; the propriety of inscribing them to your Grace would be easily seen, and no apology would be required for the liberty I have taken. The only circumstance, which I can plead in my own favour, is, that this publication is intended to promote

DEDICATION.

mote the interests of that serious and rational scheme of piety, which your Grace has ever distinguished by your patronage, and recommended by your example.

I am, my Lord,

With great respect,

Your Grace's

Most faithful servant,

James-Street Terrace,
Buckingham-Gate,

MAY 10. 1787.

THE AUTHOR.

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TH O U G H T S

ON THE

COMPOSITION and DELIVERY

OF A

S E R M O N.

WHEN one, who appears as a culprit at the bar of the public, has the temerity to seat himself upon the bench, he seems voluntarily to provoke a severe inquisition, and to be left without excuse, should he be found guilty of a violation of those laws by which he himself has presumed to appreciate the merit of his contemporaries. There is another, and, I will confess, a still stronger, objection to

a

prefatory

prefatory dissertations; and that is, that they are too frequently indirect apologies for the author's defects; or, the artful means of gratifying his vanity, by permitting him, without the appearance of open effrontery, to be the herald of his own commendation. I shall, however, be deterred by none of these considerations from what I conceive to be my duty. I shall therefore content myself, for the present, with disclaiming, in general terms, every sordid intention of the kind; and, without entering into the merits of the discourses which are contained in this volume, or their connexion with this essay, I would wish to point the reader's attention to what appears of more immediate consequence, the utility of the design, and the importance of the object.

I do not know any species of composition, which is more deserving of critical attention than that which is appropriated to the pulpit; and I will add, that I do not know any which appears to want it more.

That

That it is from its nature liable to very great abuses, and at no time since the apostolic age has been free from error, must be allowed by every person conversant in the literary history of the church; but, of late years, so depraved a taste has been introduced by the love of novelty, and the admission of illiterate persons into holy orders, that the keenest inspection of criticism is become necessary to reduce to order the extravagancies of pulpit empiricism. A few observations, therefore, having occurred to my recollection during the course of my labour in preparing the discourses which follow for the press, and conceiving that this volume might probably be read by some of the younger clergy, as well as by a few of the religious part of the laity, I determined to embrace the opportunity of presenting them to the public.

The utility of these remarks, however, may possibly not be altogether confined to one species of composition. What I have to advance, with respect to style in particu-

lar, will, I flatter myself, not be unacceptable to young writers in general : indeed, every attempt to refine the taste, and to exercise the judgement, is generally found of advantage beyond the sphere of its immediate intention.

As I do not pretend to exhibit a complete view of the subject, I have entitled this attempt, " Thoughts on the Composition and Delivery of a Sermon." But, as desultory maxims or precepts are seldom of much use, I have endeavoured to reduce my sentiments to some kind of order; and the grand divisions, which I mean to adopt, will be the CHOICE OF A SUBJECT, the ARRANGEMENT, and the STYLE : to which I mean to add a few cursory observations respecting MANNER OF DELIVERY.*

I. OF

* The design of Christian oratory (says St. Augustin) is either to instruct men in the truth, to refute their errors, or to persuade them to the practice of virtue, and an abhorrence of vice. The first requires plain narration; the second, strength of argument and ratiocination; and the third, the art of moving the mind and affections. As the Christian

tian

I. OF THE CHOICE OF A SUBJECT.

IN the primitive church a custom prevailed, which may be ultimately traced into the Jewish;* though the time of its introduction into the latter is not very easily ascertained. The bishop or presbyter, who read the portion of Scripture selected for the day, concluded that part of the service with a general explanation of the passages,

the orator speaks that only which is holy, just, and good, he endeavours to speak in such a manner, that he may be heard with understanding, with pleasure, and with effect.— That he may be heard with understanding, he speaks with plainness and perspicuity, and a regard to the capacities and knowledge of his hearers; that he may be heard with pleasure, he will pay such attention to the common rules of eloquence, as to endeavour to speak with acuteness, elegance, and strength; and, that he may be heard with effect, he will labour to persuade and to convince his auditors of the truth and importance of his doctrines.

AUG. de Doctrin. Christo, l. 4. c. 4.

Idem, l. 4. c. 15. Idem, l. 4. c. 5.

Idem, l. 4. c. 12.

* See LUKE iv. 16, 17. xx. 1. xxi. 37. JOHN viii. 20. ACTS xiii. 13.

and with earnestly exhorting the audience to profit from the instructions, or to imitate the example, which had then been exhibited.* These exhortations were brief and unadorned, and were sometimes accompanied with other explications of Scripture, which were successively delivered by those of the society, who declared themselves under the peculiar influence of the Spirit ; while their prophetic brethren, who were present in the assembly, decided upon the respect which was due to their authority.† It is probable that what at first consisted only of a few short and perhaps unconnected sentences would gradually, and by those who possessed fluency of thought and facility of expression, be made to assume a more regular form. Origen ‡ was the first who introduced long explanatory discourses into Christian assemblies ; and preaching in his time began to be formed upon the nice rules of Grecian eloquence,

* Justin. Apol. 2, p. 98.

† Mosheim, Cent. 1, Part 2, Chap. 4.

‡ Mosh. Cent. 3, Part. 2, Chap. 4.

The great superiority of these studied and regular compositions over extempore effusions soon excluded the latter almost entirely from the service of the church, though at some periods we find them occasionally resorted to. Origen,* the great father of pulpit-oratory, at above sixty years of age, and when by continued use and exercise he had acquired great facility both in composition and delivery, began to indulge himself in the practice of extempore oratory. The custom, however, was not confined to him. Cyril and several of his contemporaries addressed their respective audiences in unprepared discourses, which the diligence of the public notaries of the church have preserved from oblivion: and many of the sermons of Chrysostom, together with his celebrated discourse upon his return from banishment, are proofs not only of the existence of the custom, but that extempore compositions are not necessarily deficient

* Euseb. lib. 6. c. 36.

either in elegance or method. It is probable, however, that, at a time when nice and determined rules had been formed for pulpit-oratory, few would attempt extempore addresses, except upon sudden and particular emergencies, and then they would be attempted by such only as previous habits of study and recitation had peculiarly qualified for the practice. Of those which have reached posterity, we know that many, and probably the greater part, received the after-corrections of their respective authors.*

However diminutive and simple in its origin, preaching very soon came to be considered as a principal part of public worship. Sometimes two or three ser-

* At the Reformation in England, many complaints were made of those, who were licensed to preach; and, that they might be able to justify themselves, they began generally to write and read their sermons: the manifest superiority of this mode over extempore preaching has continued it in the church of England ever since. See BURNET'S *Hist. Reform.* Vol. I. p. 317.

mons* were preached in the same assembly by the presbyters and bishop in succession; and, when two or more bishops happened to be present, it was usual for them to preach after each other, reserving the last place for the most eminent person. The sermons upon these occasions were necessarily short, as the time limited for public worship was only two hours. It was probably upon some of these occasions that the short sermons of St. Augustin were composed, many of which may be pronounced distinctly, and delivered in eight minutes, and a few in almost half that time.

The general regard which was paid to preaching, as a necessary part of public worship, is evident from its having been a part of the discipline of every Christian church, except that of Rome, in which, as Sozomon † informs us, at the time he

* Bingham's Eccl. Antiq. book 14. c. 4.

† Sozom. lib. 7. c. 19.

wrote no such custom existed. Sermons were however again introduced into that church by Leo, but again discontinued, till, after an interval of more than five hundred years, Pius V. once more made them a necessary part of public worship.

As the institution of preaching commenced in the explication of Scripture, it still retained, through the many revolutions of the public taste, some respect to its origin; and, with a few exceptions, a portion of the sacred writings constituted the basis of the discourse;* though latterly it was reduced almost to the form of a motto, which had frequently but little connexion with the principal subject. From this state of facts we may easily perceive the source of those two modes of exhortation, which now prevail in the church: I mean the simply explanatory, and the didactic or declamato-

* Some of the homilies of Chrysostom were preached without a text. *CHRYST. Hom. Post. Red.* 3, 4, 5, 6, &c. Melancthon heard a priest at Paris, who took his text from Aristotle's *Ethics*.

ry. Both have their particular uses, and perhaps neither ought to be uniformly preferred.

In the choice of a subject, however, young preachers will do well to advert in general to the origin of the institution; to consider that its immediate design is the exposition of Scripture. And, though I do not see any reason for excluding utterly from the pulpit those discourses, which treat of the virtues and vices in an abstract and philosophical manner; yet I confess, that sermon, which follows the order of the text, appears more immediately consistent with the design, and more correspondent to the nature of the composition.

For the same reason, I am induced to prefer those discourses, which tend to remove the difficulties, and elucidate the obscurities of the Scriptures. I do not wish to be understood, as recommending any tedious philological disquisitions, any laborious collations, or those exercises, which are obviously only calculated for the closet.

It

It is difficult to command the attention of a common congregation, be the matter ever so plain and practical. It would therefore be scarcely less absurd to introduce mathematical calculations than such disquisitions as these.

I am still more offended with those preachers, who regularly pay their audience the unwelcome compliment of supposing their faith in continual danger of invasion; and think it absolutely necessary to be constantly insisting on the proofs of revelation. The persons, to whom alone such reasoning can be of use, take care very seldom to throw themselves in the way of it; and, as Swift remarks, can any thing be more absurd, “ than, for the sake of
“ three or four fools, who are past grace,
“ to perplex the minds of well-disposed
“ people with doubts, which probably
“ would never have otherwise come into
“ their minds?”

The church of God was never intended as a school of speculation, or a place to
indulge

indulge the licentiouſneſs of fancy in doubtful diſputation. It is a wretched abuſe of time to bewilder our hearers in the nice diſtinctions of the ſchoolmen, in the explanation of myſteries, which perhaps are not to be explained, or which at leaſt require much previous ſtudy, and call for all the advantages of ſolitude, and of leiſure, to enable the mind to comprehend or to follow the tenour of the argument. * Let us leave to the cloſet, the doctrines of the incarnation, of the trinity, † of the free-will of man, of the final election or reprobation of mankind; for there alone I am convinced they can be ſtudied with attention or effect.

* “ The minds of men, whether learned or ignorant, generally avoid pain; and the learned have fatigue enough in the ſtudy, without increaſing it at church.”

CLAUDE on *Comp. of Ser. c. 2.*

† In an aſſembly of people profeſſing the doctrines of the church of England, it is not leſs impertinent to inſiſt on the proofs of the trinity than on thoſe concerning the exiſtence of a GOD.

But,

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But,

But, the most absurd and useless of all discourses are those, which treat of questions absolutely removed beyond the sphere of our knowledge. Such are many sermons concerning the manner of the divine existence; the state of the soul after death; the nature of the hypostatic union; the existence, the number of the angels, and the means of their communication; * what would have been the state of Adam if the fall had never taken place; and abundance of other topics, which can only serve to gratify an idle and visionary humour of speculation, and can answer no practical end whatever.

In this place it may not be improper to remark, that all fantastical applications of Scripture are carefully to be avoided. It is dangerous on any occasion to depart from the plain track of common sense; and there is no attempt at ingenuity so easy as that

* See several instances of this kind in Mr. ROBINSON's notes on M. Claude's *Essay*.

which

which borders upon nonsense. Most of the French sermons are of this kind. * There is one of Massillon upon the story of the woman of Samaria, which will afford a tolerable specimen. "I find here," says the preacher, "three reasons for resisting the grace of Christianity: 1st, her station or condition; *How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?* 2d, the difficulty; *the well is deep, &c.* 3d, the variety of

* Those critics, whose complaisance or whose indolence has induced them to take their opinion of Gallic eloquence from the critics of that nation, have rashly assigned the preference to the oratory of the French pulpit. I have gone through the drudgery of perusing all the most celebrated of their preachers; and I will not hesitate to declare, that, except a sermon or two of Massillon, there are scarcely any which deserve, I will not say to be compared with the English preachers, but to be read at all. They are in general written, indeed, in a style of animated rhetoric, but altogether in a bad taste. They abound in points, antitheses, and conceits. But, their great defect is a poverty of matter. It is difficult, through the mass of words, to find any ideas at all; and, when you have found them, as Gratiano says, "they are not worth the search."

"opinions;

“ opinions ; *our fathers worshipped on this mountain, &c.*” The heads of the discourse are extremely well chosen ; but it is obvious, that the application of the text to them is mere trifling ; a sport of the fancy in opposition to every principle of reason, and contrary to that seriousness and respect, with which the word of GOD ought ever to be treated.

Lastly. Unity and simplicity are in every case essential to perfection. A sermon must have one determinate end and object ; must be confined to the explaining of a single doctrine, or the enforcing of some one virtue. An accumulation of thought always oppresses the human mind ; and, where there are too many arguments or precepts, there is a great chance that none of them will be remembered.* Those preachers, who attempt to crowd the whole duty of a

* “ Propose one point in one discourse, and stick to it ;
“ a hearer never carries away more than one impression.”

man, moral and religious, into a single sermon, can only be compared to their brethren of the laity, who pretend to cure all diseases by a single nostrum. By thus attempting to give you every thing, they in fact give you nothing : and we find that, however they vary their texts, the sermon is always the same ; the same trite chain of general sentiments, without any specific or useful instruction whatever.

By recommending an attention to the origin of the institution, I may seem to have insinuated, that a long text is generally preferable to a short one. I have however found it otherwise by experience, and have seldom known the former either useful or agreeable. A long text frequently involves such a number of propositions as must effectually destroy the unity of a discourse : besides, that a text, when well-chosen, and not too long, will commonly be remembered, and of itself will make a distinct and useful impression on the hearers.

The contrary error is, however, still more reprehensible. It is one of the mean artifices of barren genius, to surprize the audience with a text consisting of one or two words. I have heard of a person of this description, who preached from the words "Jehovah Jireh," and another, from the monosyllable "But." * These are contemptible devices, more adapted to the moving theatre of the mountebank than to the pulpit, and can only serve to captivate the meanest and most ignorant of the vulgar. †

* He perhaps might justify himself upon the same principle with Dr. Eachard's divine, who made *AND* one of the heads of his discourse, adding: "this word is but a particle, and a small one: but small things are not to be despised: *MATT. xviii. 10. Take heed that ye despise not one of these LITTLE ones.*" *Contempt of the Clergy*, p. 82.

† "Never choose such texts as have not a complete sense; for, only impertinent and foolish people will attempt to preach from one or two words, which signify nothing." *CLAUDE*, c. 1.

"Give me a serious preacher, (says Fenelon,) who speaks for my sake, and not for his own."

II. OF ARRANGEMENT.

With respect to ARRANGEMENT, it will also be necessary to have some regard to what has been remarked concerning the origin of preaching. It is evident that, when a sermon is explanatory or illustrative of Scripture, it ought to follow the order and spirit of the text. When it is not so, it must follow that order, which is dictated by sound logic, and the laws of composition. There are some texts, which contain several members, or inferior propositions, such is that of Micah vi. 8. "What is required of thee, O man, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy god?" Such is that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself," &c. and these naturally divide themselves. Though I think young preachers ought to be cautioned rather to follow the order of the sense than of the words. Again, there are

some texts, which as it were carry the preacher along with the course of the narrative: of this we have an example in Massillon's sermon on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Some texts, according to the nature of the subject, will only admit of two divisions, even when they seem to contain more parts or members: for instance, Bishop Taylor's famous sermon on Matt. xvi. 26. "What shall a man profit, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Here the preacher divides his sermon into two parts; and first inquires into the value of the world, and how far a man may be profited by the possession of it; and, secondly, he inquires into the nature and value of a soul, and the loss to be sustained in parting with it.*

There

* Sermons will perhaps admit of another classification. 1st. When the discourse is altogether an explanation or elucidation of the text. 2d. When a practical application is to be drawn from the text. And, 3dly. When both these objects

There are, however, texts which contain only one simple proposition. In this case, the sermon assumes the form of an essay; and the judgement of the author must direct him to that arrangement, which appears most commodious. For instance, if the purpose of the discourse be to recommend the practice of some moral virtue, the preacher may first state its general utility to mankind; afterwards its necessity, according to the law of GOD; and, lastly, he may enforce it in a particular address to

jects are united: and I apprehend it will be found the most acceptable mode of preaching on doctrinal texts, or those which require explanation, to endeavour, towards the close of the discourse, to draw some practical inference from it.

Vitringa's rules, for preaching on doctrinal texts, are: —
 “ 1st. State the doctrine clearly. 2d. Prove and illustrate
 “ it by parallel texts; and, if possible, by reasoning. 3d.
 “ Vindicate it, if you think any of your auditors deny
 “ it. 4th. Bring it home to the heart,” ROBINSON'S
 Claude, Vol. I. 402.

“ The Sermons of the 3d century (says Mr. Robinson)
 “ are divisible into three general parts. 1st. A short in-
 “ troduction. 2d. An exposition of the text. And, last,
 “ a moral exhortation arising out of the discussion.” Ib.

his hearers, founded on the preceding arguments.

The sermons of the last century in general consisted of too many divisions. The hearers were bewildered in pursuing the arrangement of the preacher, and lost the sentiments while they were attending to the order of the discourse. There are indeed some sermons, which only deserve the name of heads of an oration. The moderns have fallen into an opposite extreme, namely, a total neglect of order and method. Common sense points out a middle course: it is obvious, that a few natural and easy divisions assist the memory; while it is commonly perplexed and confused by too many.

Thus far as to the arrangement of sermons in particular; but there is an arrangement, or order, of a general nature, which must be attended to in every composition; and is absolutely necessary to be observed in those discourses, which are founded upon such texts as contain a simple proposition, and therefore treat of the virtues

or

or vices, or of the particular doctrines of religion in an abstract manner, and without any regard to the literal order of the text. Perhaps the simplest division is that of Aristotle, * into, the EXORDIUM, which introduces the speaker and the subject; the PROPOSITION, which explains the design of the oration; the PROOF, or argument, which supports it; and the CONCLUSION, which applies it directly to the audience.

I. With respect to the EXORDIUM, or introduction, the first rule is, that it be very *clear*. For, as the intent of it is to prepare the minds of the hearers, if any thing abstruse or paradoxical occur, there will be some danger of alienating their minds in such a manner, that they will probably not be able to recover their attention during the whole discourse. For this reason, long sentences ought to be avoided, as they are apt to perplex the understanding, as well as to fatigue the ear, and run the speaker out of breath before he is properly entered upon his subject.

* Rhet. l. iii. c. 13.

In the second place, an exordium should always be cool, temperate, and modest. The exordium of Sterne to his sermon on the house of mourning,—“ That I deny,”—is a paltry artifice, unworthy the imitation of any man of taste or genius. Indeed I know no author so likely as Sterne to corrupt the style and taste of his readers; all his writings are full of trick and affectation, (the very opposite of those chaste models of eloquence which antiquity has transmitted to us,) and are at best only calculated to excite the momentary admiration of the unthinking part of mankind.

Thirdly. It is remarked by Cicero, that a common-place exordium, such as the following, “ Happiness is the great end and aim of all human pursuits,” is generally a token of a barren genius, and has therefore a very ill effect. As the whole oration is necessarily confined within very narrow limits, that exordium, which leads most directly to the subject, is certainly to be preferred.

Fourthly.

Fourthly. An exordium should be agreeable and easy. The pleasing is absolutely necessary to conciliate the good opinion of every audience.

Fifthly. I would recommend brevity as a particular excellence on the present occasion. It was the usual custom of the old divines to introduce their discourses by a long historical or explanatory exordium, setting forth the state and circumstances of the person to whom the text related, &c. &c. which was nothing more than retailing the history of the Bible, in language always inferior, and frequently very indifferent and homely : as our auditors, however, are not quite so patient, these tedious introductions are necessarily and properly laid aside.*

I would

* Brevity, in every part of a composition designed for the pulpit, appears to have been at all times a considerable *desideratum* with great numbers of the people. Frequent exhortations to hear patiently the word of God occur in the writings of the fathers, and various stratagems were used to detain

I would wish one point to be particularly adverted to in this place; and that is, that the eloquence of the pulpit is essentially different from that of political assemblies. In the latter it may be proper, and is probably sometimes absolutely necessary, to preface a motion or argument by some account of the speaker and his motives. In the pulpit, there can be nothing so disgusting, so impertinent, and so vulgar, as egotism. The preacher should never appear himself, he is only the representative of another; he comes to explain the word of GOD, and not to sacrifice to his own vanity. The long introductions of Cicero or Demosthenes are therefore not to be imitated by pulpit-orators.

detain their auditors till the close of the service, even so far as to lock the doors of the church and confine them. These ingenious devices were enforced by ecclesiastical laws; and the 4th council of Carthage enacted, that those who shewed a contempt for the discourses of their teachers should be excommunicated from the church. Cyprian Vit. Cesar, c. 12. Conc. Carth. 4. Can. 24.

II. The necessity of acquainting the audience with the design of the speaker is so obvious, that little need be urged on the subject of the PROPOSITIVE part of a discourse. If any definitions of terms be required, (as may be the case, when the text is liable to be misunderstood, or when some material doctrine depends upon the interpretation of that passage of Scripture,) it will be proper to introduce them in this part; since, if deferred to the middle or the conclusion, they may chance to prove soporiferous. In truth, I do not know any thing more disgusting than insisting too much on the definition of single terms. M. Claude, who appears in general to have had very just notions of preaching, errs greatly against simplicity in this respect. In one of the outlines of sermons, which he exhibits as models, from a single expression in the text, "Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross," he takes occasion to introduce a long dissertation on sanctification,

another

another on affliction ; and the plan of the discourse, according to his arrangement, contains the substance of at least four moderate sermons.

III. The PROOFS, or argumentative part, must intirely depend upon the nature of the subject. There is an excellent collection of topics upon moral subjects in Aristotle's Rhetoric ; but Bishop Wilkins's Ecclesiastes, or Gift of Preaching, is one of the most ingenious books that I have seen for the assistance of young preachers.

I cannot pass this opportunity without again recommending, in the strongest terms, an attention to *unity*. Without this, a composition (if indeed it deserve the name) can never be useful ; and least of all a composition which is to be heard, and not studied. A good sermon must have a single object, the more simple the better ; and every part of the discourse must tend to impress this object forcibly on the mind. It is almost unnecessary to add, that a judicious preacher will form a sort of climax
in

in his reasoning, and reserve his most forcible arguments for the last. The argument ought also to be full and pointed. I have heard sermons, in which, after the principal matter was closed, a tail, or codicil, containing something not very essential to the subject, succeeded, which, like Pope's Alexandrine,

“ dragg'd its slow length along.”

There is a very good receipt for sermon-making in M. Claude's Essay on that subject. I would even advise the unpractised student to adopt occasionally some of his topics, and form them into sermons, in the order which he has prescribed; this exercise will tend to give him just notions of method, and a facility in arranging his ideas: and will not only be more improving, but more creditable than the usual practice of transcribing printed sermons.

Another practice, which I would recommend to young divines, is, before they sit down to compose a sermon, to read
some

some of the best authors, who have treated of the same subject; to close the books, and endeavour to throw the matter into that order, which appeared most perspicuous and pleasing. Reading different authors upon the subject will give a variety to their ideas; and, by writing without the books before them, the expression will at least be their own.

If, however, the young preacher be altogether diffident of his own powers; not willing to hazard original composition, and yet desirous of improvement; let him take the substance of his discourse from some approved commentary on the Scriptures, and occasionally enliven the explication by some remarks of his own. Let him draw a few practical inferences at the conclusion; and this will not only improve him in the knowledge of the Scriptures, but will gradually exercise his judgement, and form his taste for composition.

I must add, that most of the proofs, which Christian preachers introduce, ought
to

to be scriptural proofs. — If they preach morality, it must be the morality of the Gospel. Unless a sincere and fervent strain of piety pervade the whole composition, it will not, nor indeed ought it to meet with general regard. The sermons of Archbishop Secker are deserving of high commendation in this respect; but the most perfect models are to be found in a volume lately published by an amiable and accomplished prelate of our church.

IV. The CONCLUSION of a sermon should not (indeed, considering the present length of discourses, must not) be prolix. It ought in general to be practical; and it is obvious, that it requires a more animated style than any other part of the composition. I do not know a more useful form for a concluding address, than that which consists of a recapitulation of the principal matter of the sermon; indeed, if the subject be not very plain and obvious, such a conclusion is absolutely necessary. It serves not only to recal all the useful and striking

striking passages to the minds of the audience, but gives them a clearer view of the whole than they would otherwise have, and impresses it on the memory. * Variety is however necessary; and, I confess, I do not know so great a blemish in Dr. Ogden's excellent Sermons, as a want of variety in their conclusions. If the peroration do not consist of a recapitulation, it ought at least to proceed naturally and regularly from the subject.

On the whole, it is practice only, which can impart facility and method in the arrangement of our ideas. Rules can only serve to restrain the irregularities of the imagination. It would be impossible, in

* It would not be easy for the popular preachers of the day to adopt this form, as their compositions are mere farra-
gos, collected from all quarters of the globe, with no unity
of subject, no regard to the text, no express object whatever
in view. I speak not of extempore preachers, since method
is hardly to be expected from them: I speak of those who
pretend to write, and would be thought very profound theo-
logians.

such

such a dissertation as the present, or indeed in any work of criticism, to furnish thoughts or sentiments. Since Mr. Addison recommended the practice, it is become very common among the clergy to preach from the sermons of approved authors, either by abridging them, or sometimes by transcribing them entire. The practice is, in my opinion, more for the benefit of the audience, than of the clergy themselves, though the former are the only persons likely to complain.* What person of common sense, indeed, would not rather hear a sermon of Sherlock, of Secker, of Porteus, or of Blair, than the trite and unconnected jargon, with which we are generally assailed by the most popular preach-

* This practice is so far from novel, that it is of considerable antiquity in the church. Augustin rather commended than blamed those preachers, who, when conscious of their own inability to compose well, availed themselves of the performances of others. *AUG. Doctrin. Christ.* l. 4. c. 29.

ers * in the metropolis? If these men (whose voices are generally good, and whose manner, if not quite so affected, might be rather conciliating) would, in the room of their own bombast, favour their auditors with a good printed sermon, they would find that they might in general pass undetected, and their exhibitions would not be so uniformly disgusting as they are to persons of taste and erudition.

The most formidable objection against the use of printed sermons, is, that it re-

* I would not be understood as applying this or any other term to the disparagement of any sect or denomination of Christians whatever. I trust a due consideration of the abstruse and difficult nature of those doctrinal points, which have been the objects of controversy in the Christian world, has taught me to treat with candour and indulgence the opinions of other men, or rather to request their candour and indulgence towards mine. There are quack-preachers of every denomination, Socinian and Calvinist, Arian and Arminian. The doctrines and mysteries of religion should always be treated with reverence and respect, however differently thought of by different persons. Mock pathos, unconnected matter, jargon, and buffoonery, are human concerns, and are deserving of censure, wherever they are found to predominate.

moves

moves the younger clergy out of the way of improvement, and probably begets a habit of indolence. When, however, they do not compose their own discourses, I would advise them to apply to approved authors, rather than to obscure or indifferent writers, as is frequently done to avoid discovery. It is much better to be sometimes detected, than to tire an audience by continually preaching indifferent matter: and the observation is but too true, that, where there is not genius to compose, there is seldom judgement to select.

III. OF STYLE.

The third object, which I proposed to treat of in this dissertation, is *STYLE*. I must however premise, that in the compositions for the pulpit, as well as in every other, unless there be a ground-work of good sense and argument, unless there be solidity of reasoning and energy of sentiment, all the graces of style will be accumulated in vain.

The essentials of a good style, at least as far as regards the present subject, may be reduced to three: PERSPICUITY, PURITY, and a moderate portion of ORNAMENT.

I. PERSPICUITY is the first excellence of style: indeed I do not know so decisive a proof of genius. A smooth and polished diction, or pompous figures, are frequently the achievements of Dulness; but it is the characteristic of Genius alone to flash conviction and instruction on the minds of the audience.* Perspicuity will depend, in the first place, on the *choice of words*; and, secondly, on the *arrangement of them*.

As far as regards the *choice of words*, obscurity results, in the first place,

From obsolete or affected language, which is not generally understood. No person of taste would wish at present to imitate the language of our liturgy in the

* "By perspicuity, (says Quintilian,) care is taken, "not that the hearer may understand, if he will; but, "that he must understand, whether he will or not."

use of the word *prevent*, — “ Prevent us,
 “ O Lord, in all our doings ;” nor in that
 of the word *after*, — “ O Lord, reward us
 “ not after our iniquities.” Many abuses
 of words have been introduced from the
 French idiom : Lord Bolingbroke, for in-
 stance, says, “ by the persons I *intend*
 “ here,” instead of I *mean*.—Analogous to
 this is the use of Latinisms, as *integrity* to
 denote *entireness*, *conscience* for *consciousness* :
 “ The *conscience* of approving one’s self a
 “ benefactor to mankind is the noblest re-
 “ compensate for being so.”*

Again, obscurity proceeds from the use
 of ambiguous or indefinite words. Exam-
 ples of this occur in the following senten-
 ces : “ As for such animals as are *mortal*,
 “ (or noxious,) we have a right to destroy
 “ them.”† “ The Christians rudely dis-
 “ turbed the *service* of paganism ; and,
 “ rushing in crowds round the tribunals of

* Spectator.

† Guard. 61, quoted by Dr. Campbel, Phil. of Rhet.

“ the magistrates, called upon them to
 “ pronounce and inflict the sentence of the
 “ law.” * Here it is not easy to define
 what *service* is meant, whether civil or reli-
 gious. A similar ambiguity may be found
 in the same author. Speaking of the cru-
 elty of Valentinian, the historian adds : —
 “ The merit of Maximin, who had
 “ slaughtered the noblest families of Rome,
 “ was rewarded with the royal approbation
 “ and the prefecture of Gaul. Two fierce
 “ and enormous bears, distinguished by
 “ the appellations of Innocence and Mica-
 “ aurea, could alone deserve to *share* the
 “ favour of Maximin.” † It is evident
 that we must have recourse to the context to
 understand that these creatures were not the
 favourites of Maximin, but of Valenti-
 nian. A writer on criticism has the fol-
 lowing sentence : “ There appears to be a
 “ remarkable difference betwixt *one of the*
 “ *first* of ancient and of modern critics.” ‡

* GIBBON'S Hist. c. 16. † GIBBON'S Hist. c. 25.

‡ OGILVIE on Orig. Comp. p. 104.

The embarrassment of this sentence would have been entirely avoided by inserting the words *one of the first* a second time, which probably an apprehension of offending the ear prevented.

The cases are so very numerous, in which an ill choice of words, or an imprudent use of them, may darken the expression, that it would be almost impossible to lay down any definite rules upon the subject.—Perfection in this respect is only to be acquired by practice. Possibly the following remarks may be of some use to young writers. First. Endeavour to inform yourself perfectly concerning the etymology and meaning of words. Secondly. Consult the best modern authors, and observe their different applications. The original sense is not always a certain guide in the use of common words; though, if nicely attended to, it will sometimes help us to the reasons of their application. Thirdly. Be not too anxious for variety of expression. It is well observed by the Abbé Girard, that when a

performance grows dull, it is not so much, because the ear is tired by the frequent repetition of the same sound, as because the mind is fatigued by the frequent recurrence of the same idea. Lastly. We cannot be too much on our guard against the vulgar idiom. Most writers who affect ease and familiarity in writing are apt to slide into it :

“ But ease in writing flows from art, not chance,

“ As those move easiest, who have learn'd to dance.”

That ambiguity, as well as inaccuracy, is not uncommonly the effect of introducing the vulgar phraseology into written composition, is evident from the very incorrect and absurd use of the active verb *to lay*, instead of the neuter verb *to lie*. This solecism has arisen I presume from confounding the past tense of the latter with the present of the former verb. Let it be observed, however, that when a noun follows in the objective case, the verb active (*to lay*) may be used : as, *to lay down* an employment ;

ment ; and sometimes when the verb is reflected or neutralized : as,

“ Soft on the flow’ry herb I found *me laid*.” *

But, to say “ Death *lays* upon her like an untimely frost,” or to say “ I have such a thing *laying* by me,” would be a gross and intolerable barbarism.

Perspicuity is injured by bad *arrangement*, in the following instances.

1st. By separating the adjective from its proper substantive: “ they chose to indulge themselves in the hour of *natural* festivity.”

— Better “ in the *natural* hour of festivity.”

2dly. By using the same pronoun in reference to different persons or things in the same sentence: “ and *they* did all eat and “ were filled : and *they* took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.” † By the last *they* it is difficult to say who are meant, the multitude or only the disciples.

* Milton. † MATT. xiv. 20.

The following sentences are faulty on account of an indiscreet use of the relative. Speaking of Porto Bello: "this celebrated harbour, *which* was formerly very well defended by forts, *which* Admiral Vernon destroyed in 1740, seems to afford an entrance 600 toises broad; but is so straitened with rocks that are near the surface of the water, that it is reduced to a very narrow channel."* Better thus: "this celebrated harbour was defended, &c." "It seems to afford, &c."—"This activity drew great numbers of enterprizing men over to Virginia, who came either in search of *fortune*, or of *liberty*, *which* is the only compensation for the want of *it*:"||—here the two antecedents are so confounded, that it requires a pause to distinguish them, and the construction is very ungraceful as well as obscure. One mode of avoiding ambiguity in this case will be, when two antecedents occur, putting one

* JUSTAMOND's Transf. of *Raynal*, B. 7. || *Ib.*

of them, if possible, in the plural, and the other in the singular number.

3dly. Obscurity is produced by separating the adverb and the adjective, or the adverb and the verb. Ex. "A power is
 " requisite of fixing the intellectual eye
 " upon successive objects so steadily, as
 " that the *more* may never prevent us from
 " doing justice to the *less* important." *
 " His subject is precisely of that kind,
 " which a daring imagination could *alone*
 " have adopted : " † — here it is not accurately defined whether a daring imagination *only* could have adopted, &c. or whether it could have adopted that subject *only*, and no other. " He conjured the senate, that
 " the purity of his reign might not be
 " stained by the blood *even* of a guilty senator : " ‡ — the arrangement would be more perfect, " by the blood of even a guilty senator." " He atoned for the

* OGILVIE *on Orig. Comp.* vol. ii. p. 94. † *Ib.*

‡ GIBBON'S *Hist.* c. iv. ad fin.

" murder

“ murder of an innocent son, by the execution, perhaps, of a guilty wife :” * — the doubt in this sentence may apply to the reality of the execution. “ Their intimacy had commenced in the happier period, *perhaps*, of their youth and obscurity.” †

4thly. The following is an example of ambiguity arising from the wrong position of a conjunction. The historian, speaking of an impolitic edict of Julian, thus expresses himself : “ He enacted *that*, in a time of scarcity, it (corn) should be sold at a price, which had seldom been known in the most plentiful years.” ‡ A common reader would infer from the above, that it was a standing order, that corn should in every time of scarcity be sold cheaper than in a time of plenty, which does not appear from the context to be the intention of the author. Speaking of parents misjudging of the conduct of schoolmasters,

* Ib. c. 18. † Ib. ‡ Ib.

a very well informed, and, in general, correct author adds: "It has broke the peace of many an ingenious man, who had engaged in the care of youth, and paved the way to the ruin of hopeful boys." It is not perfectly clear whether the circumstance or the master "paved the way, &c." It is impossible to decipher the following sentence. Respecting the Pennsylvania marble, of which chimney-pieces, tables, &c. are made, the historian adds: "These valuable materials could not have been found in common in the houses, *unless* they had been lavished in the churches." *

5thly. Perspicuity is injured very frequently by the fear of concluding a sentence with a trifling word; but surely, however ungraceful, a confused style is a much greater blemish. "The court of chancery," says a respectable author, "frequently mitigates, and breaks the teeth of the

* JUSTAMOND'S *Raynal*, B. 17.

" common

“common law.” From this sentence it might be inferred, that it *mitigated* the teeth. Better, therefore: “frequently mitigates the common law, and breaks the teeth of it,” or “its teeth.”

6thly. It is an old observation, that the desire of brevity generally induces obscurity. This is exemplified in many forms of expression, to which habit serves to reconcile us, but which are in themselves really ambiguous. Thus we speak of “the reformation of Luther;” which, if the circumstance were not well understood, might mean the reformation of the man, instead of the reformation of the church.

7thly. An error opposite to this is long sentences, and parentheses. Long periods, however, seldom create obscurity, when the natural order of thought is preserved; especially if each division, clause, or member of the sentence, be complete in itself. It is in general the insertion of foreign matter, and parenthetical sentences, that confuse a style.

From

From these few observations concerning perspicuity, it will be sufficiently obvious, that the obscurity of some preachers does not result from the profundity and sublimity of their matter, (as they would wish us to believe,) nor yet altogether from a confusion of ideas, but frequently from a turbid and perplexed style. In general, however, we may safely lay it down as an incontrovertible maxim, that the sermon, which is not clear and intelligible, is the worst of sermons: since, however trite the matter, however vulgar the language, if it be understood, something may still be gleaned from it.

II. The second essential of a good style, which I pointed out, was PURITY, or elegance. The style of sermons, I am ready to grant, ought to be suited in general to the audience. But there is a certain style, which is adapted to people of almost all descriptions; that, I mean, which equally avoids technical and affected expressions, and those which are mean and vulgar. In
pursuing

pursuing this subject, that I may not fatigue the reader with new distinctions, I shall follow the method which I adopted in the former case, and shall first consider purity of style as relating to the choice of words; and, next, as to the arrangement of them.

The offences against PURITY of style, as far as respects the *choice of words*, may be reduced to the following heads. 1st. *Obsolete* or uncommon expressions.* 2d. *Vulgarisms*. 3d. *Jargon*, or *cant*.

1st. In an age of novelty we have very little to apprehend from obsolete expressions. Scarcely any person, who is at all conversant with polite company, would use such expressions as *beboof*, *bebest*, *peradventure*, *sundry*, *anon*, &c. It is not a very easy matter to determine the era of pure English;

* "In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold;

"Alike fantastic, if too new or old.

"Be not the first by whom the new are try'd,

"Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

Ess. on Crit.

but

but I think we should not look further back than the Revolution: Hooker, Bacon, Milton, Hobbes, and even Temple, are scarcely to be considered as authorities in this respect.

Contrary to this, is the more fashionable error of using affected language, and particularly Gallicisms. This nation has been little indebted to the literature of France; and we have no occasion to change the bullion of our language for the tinsel of theirs. Dr. Campbell has, with great accuracy, collected a variety of these new-imported phrases, which he very properly calls, "stray words, or exiles," that have no affinity to our language, and indeed are no better than insects of the day. It is of the utmost importance to literature to adopt some standard of language; there is no setting bounds to the liberty of coining words, if it be at all admitted; and, in that case, the invaluable productions of our ancestors will soon become totally unintelligible.

2d. But the more dangerous vice, because it is the more common, and especially among the popular preachers of the day, is VULGARITY. Some instances of this, however, are to be found in very approved authors, and seem to demonstrate how necessary it is to be on our guard against it. Lord Kaimes speaks of the comedies of Aristophanes *wallowing* in looseness and detraction,* (which is moreover a false metaphor;) of “the *pushing* genius of a nation; † of a nation being devoid of *bowels*, ‡ &c. The following phrase is surely intolerably low for serious composition: “To imagine that the gratifying of any sense, or the indulging of any delicacy in meat, drink, or apparel, is in itself a vice, can never *enter into a head* that is not disordered, &c.” || Dr. Beattie is not free from such expressions as “a long-winded rhetorician,” “screaming and

* *Sketches of Man.* † *Ib.* B. ii. §. 7.

‡ *Ib.* B. vii. §. 7. || HUME'S *Ess. on Refinement in Arts.*

“*squalling*,”

"*squalling*," &c. and Dr. Blair speaks of a circumstance *popping out* upon us ; of Milton having *chalked out* a new road in poetry ; of Achilles *pitching upon* Briseis, &c.* — Perhaps nothing but good books and good company can purify the style from coarse and vulgar expressions ; sometimes, indeed, the aptness of these words makes it difficult to part with them. When, however, we meet with a low word, we ought diligently to look for one synonymous to it. It would probably be a very improving exercise to make a collection, as they occur, of choice and elegant expressions, which may be employed instead of the common and colloquial. Thus, for *beaping up*, we may use ACCUMULATING ;

* These and many other inaccuracies are pointed out in a very excellent critical examination of Dr. Blair's Lectures, published in the Critical Review for October 1783. Mr. Robinson's translation of Claude is very faulty in this respect : he speaks of a *knack* of doing things ; of *sticking fast*, for adhering to ; of the *old setter* the bishop ; instead of to re-examine, he uses to *call over* ; instead of to deceive, to *gull* ; for being exasperated, *ready to go mad*.

For *shunned*, AVOIDED; for to *brag*, to BOAST; for their *bettors*, their SUPERIORS; for I *got rid of*, I AVOIDED. A polite writer, instead of saying he is *pushed on*, will say IMPELLED; instead of *go forwards*, or *go on*, PROCEED; instead of *you take me*, you UNDERSTAND; instead of *I had as lief*, I should LIKE AS WELL; instead of a *moot point*, a DISPUTED point; instead of *pro & con*, on BOTH SIDES; instead of *by the bye*, BY THE WAY, (though I do not much like either;) instead of *shut our ears*, CLOSE our ears; instead of *fell to work*, BEGAN. Some words it will be better to leave out; as, instead of saying, "he has a considerable *deal* of merit," say, "he has considerable merit."

When an idiom can be avoided, and a phrase strictly grammatical introduced, the latter will always be most graceful: for instance, it is more elegant to say, "I *would* rather," than "I *had* rather." This idiom probably took its rise from the abbreviation
I'd,

Id, which in conversation stands equally for *I would*, or *I had*.

When a substitute cannot be found for a mean word, it is better to reform the sentence altogether, and to express it by a periphrasis: one such “fly will mar the ointment” of the most harmonious periods.

3d. Nothing, however, can be more opposite to purity or elegance of style, than the unmeaning JARGON, which low and illiterate preachers introduce, sometimes in order to assume an air of erudition.* Such phrases as *creaturely comforts*; *man-God*; *everlasting ubiquity*; *celestial panoply*; *Triune-God*; &c. &c. are barbarisms not to be endured.† Indeed, were I to detail the in-

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stances

* “There is a sort of divines, who, if they do but happen of an unlucky hard word all the week, think themselves not careful of their flock, if they lay it not up till Sunday, and bestow it among them in their next sermon.” EACHARD’S *Contempt of the Clergy*, p. 46.

† “Among *hard words*, I number likewise those which are peculiar to divinity as it is a science, because I have observed several clergymen, otherwise little fond of ob-

“scure

stances of this depraved phraseology, I should scarcely be less disgusting than those who employ it. Similar to these are the endearing diminutives, the compound epithets, such as *life-giving*, *soul-saving*, &c. and the fulsome repetition of the most sacred names, introduced by some preachers. *Unaffected* is an epithet, appropriated in a manner to real devotion, which is displayed in actions, and in sentiments, and not in words; indeed I do not know, whether the too frequent and familiar introduction of the most solemn expressions, even in the pulpit, may not serve to lessen, rather than to increase our respect for the great object of Christian worship.

“Pure terms, yet in their sermons very liberal of those which they find in ecclesiastical writers, as if it were our duty to understand them; which I am sure it is not.” SWIFT’S *Letter to a young Clergyman*. “I believe, I may venture to insist, further, that many terms used in holy writ, particularly by St. Paul,” (he means in our antiquated translation of the apostle’s writings,) “might, with more discretion, be changed into plainer speech.” *Ib.*

PURITY

PURITY of style, as far as respects *arrangement*, is equally violated by affected stateliness, and by negligence and incorrectness. Of the former kind are the following instances.

1st. Placing the nominative case after the verb. Ex. "Wonderful are the effects of
" this passion in every view." "Not a
" little elegant is this manner of writing."*

2dly. The objective case in the beginning of the sentence. "Varieties of national
" character we observe imprinted on the
" physiognomy of nations."† And not unlike this is Mr. Gordon's very depraved construction in his translation of Tacitus:
"At this time war there was none."

3dly. The objective case before the imperative mood. "How many nations have
" certainly fallen from that importance,
" which they had formerly borne among

* Translation of Trapp's *Prælectiones*.

† DUNBAR's *Essays*.

“ the societies of mankind, let the annals
“ of the world declare.”*

I know nothing that more enfeebles a style, than beginning sentences with connective particles, such as *and*, *though*, *but*, *however*, *therefore*, &c. It seems to put the reader out of breath, and partakes in some measure of the ungracefulness and confusion of long sentences. It also destroys that compactness, which gives energy to style. These circumstances have made it common to introduce the connective as the second or third word of the sentence: and the same reasons are almost equally forcible against the use of relatives in the beginning of sentences.

It has also been generally esteemed ungraceful to conclude a sentence with a preposition or a trifling word. The auxiliary verbs are generally very bad conclusions. Ex. “ If this affects him, what must the
“ first motion of his zeal be ?” †

* Ib. † ROBINSON from Maffillon.

Lastly.

Lastly. There is often inelegance in placing the adverb before the auxiliary verb, as in the following instance: "The question stated in the preceding chapter never has been fully considered." * It would, I think, be better, "has never been fully, &c."

It would be impossible on this occasion to descend to a very minute detail. A good ear, and the perusal of good authors must unite to form a good taste in this particular. Pedantry, however, more frequently misleads us than any other cause. The style of female writers flows easier, and is commonly more harmonious, than that of professed scholars. One general rule may indeed be admitted: in narrative or plain didactic compositions, in those which are intended merely to convey information, the natural order of the words is to be preferred; but, when passion or sublimity is the object, this order may be departed from,

* LORD MONBODDO, Orig. & Prog. Lang. c. ii.

and

and a sentence must never conclude with a weak member or a trifling word. As perspicuity demands that enough shall be displayed in the first part of the sentence to make the aim of it manifest; so elegance and vivacity demand a degree of energy at the termination of it, in order to leave an impression on the mind. Sometimes, however, in very animated expression, it has a good effect to place the emphatic word the first in order, as: “*Blessed* is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”—“*Silver* and *gold* have I none, but such as *I have* I give thee.” In this last instance, the eager expectation, and the imploring look of the beggar naturally leads to a vivid conception of what was in his thoughts; and this conception is answered by the form, in which the declaration of the apostle is couched.

III. As a sermon is an oratorical composition, as it is intended for a popular assembly, and ought to interest the attention at least of the auditors, perspicuity

ity and purity of style are scarcely sufficient commendations. It should be calculated not only to instruct, but to persuade; not only to inform the judgement, but to conciliate the passions. Some degree of RHETORICAL EMBELLISHMENT, therefore, becomes absolutely necessary; and it is one of the most difficult points to determine the nature, as well as the degree of this embellishment.

It is obvious that the ornaments of oratory are materially different from those of poetry. The aim of the former is to inform and persuade; of the latter, to amuse. The one addresses the judgement and the passions; the other, the fancy. The one requires the utmost perspicuity; in the other, some degree of obscurity is frequently a beauty: a different choice and selection of the imagery and figures, which are employed, becomes therefore requisite in these different forms of composition.

The elegance of poetry frequently depends upon the happy application of imagery

gery assumed from natural objects: the imagery proper for oratory is the imagery of sentiment. In the one, the woods, the plains, the fountains, and the hills, the expanded ocean, the serenity of the heavens, are the most striking objects; in the other, the human passions and pursuits, the fate of empires, the revolutions of fortune, and the uncertainty and variation in human affairs.

The *comparison*, which is frequently one of the most engaging figures in poetry, and affords the fullest scope for luxuriant description, is in general too cold and formal for oratory. The beauty of *metaphors* will frequently be lost in an attention to the subject, or in the warmth of the enunciation; and *allusions* and *metonymies* will rather obscure than enlighten the subject. *Personification* is still more allied to obscurity; and *allegory* is least adapted of all to this species of composition. Instead of this play of the imagination, the orator must employ a force and energy of expression, a
warmth

warmth of sentiment, and the stronger figures of *iteration*, *erotesis*, and *climax*.*

* The following is a fine instance of what I call the *ITERATION*, or repetition.—“ I have slain, I have slain, not a
 “ Sp. Mælius, who was suspected of aiming at the regal
 “ power; not a Tiberius Gracchus, who seditiously deposed
 “ his colleague from the magistracy: but I have slain the
 “ man, whose adulteries our noblest matrons discovered in
 “ the sacred recesses of the gods; the man, by whose punishment the senate so frequently determined to expiate
 “ the violation of the most solemn rites; the man, who by
 “ the hands of his slaves expelled a citizen, who was
 “ esteemed by the senate, by the people, by every nation
 “ upon earth, the preserver of the city; the man, who
 “ gave and took away kingdoms, and distributed the world
 “ at his pleasure; the man, who defiled the forum
 “ with blood; the man, who fired the temple of the
 “ nymphs; in a word, the man who governed himself by
 “ no principle, who acknowledged no law, who submitted
 “ to no limitation.” *Cic. pro Milone.* The writings of St. Paul abound in these bold figures, particularly the *EROTESIS*, of which there are some uncommonly animated examples: “ What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?
 “ or despise ye the church of GOD, and shame them that
 “ have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you
 “ in this? I praise you not.” *1 COR. xi. 22.* The following is an example of the three figures united: “ Are they
 “ Hebrews? so am I: are they Israelites? so am I: are
 “ they the seed of Abraham? so am I: are they ministers
 “ of CHRIST? (I speak as a fool,) I am more, &c.” *2 COR. xi. 22, 23.*

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In the use of these, however, he must be extremely cautious; for they are dangerous in the hands of the unskilful, and require the nicest taste in the application of them.

After all, it is a question, whether the modern compositions of the pulpit are not rather to be blamed for too much than for too little affectation of ornament.* In this case, perhaps, negative instruction may be the most useful; and to shew what a style ought not to be, may answer a better purpose, than an imperfect endeavour to describe all the excellences and graces which a lively imagination and a fine taste may invent.

In the first place, the popular harangues of the day have more of poetry † than of oratory

* “ The ornaments of language generally cost the writer much trouble, and produce small advantage to the hearer. Let the character of your sermons be truth and information, and a *decent particularity*.” — PALEY’S *Ordin. Serm.*

† “ Another thing, that brings great disrespect and mischief upon the clergy, is their packing their sermons so
“ full

oratory in them, if false metaphor, inconsistent allegory, and in all respects "prose run mad," can have any claim to that appellation. Not satisfied with adopting whimsical allusions, they pursue them to an extreme of absurdity :

" And ductile dulness new meanders makes,

" And one poor word a thousand senses takes."

It can be no gratification to a rational mind to give pain, otherwise I could furnish specimens of this kind abundantly ridicu-

" full of *similitudes*; which all the world know, carry with
 " them but very small force of argument, unless there be
 " an exact agreement with that which is compared; of
 " which there is very seldom any sufficient care taken."
 EACHARD'S *Contempt*, &c. p. 58.

* " This is almost the perpetual vice of mean and low
 " preachers; for, when they catch a figurative word, or a
 " metaphor, as when GOD'S word is called a *fire*, or a *sword*,
 " or the church a *house*, &c. they never fail to make a long
 " detail of conformities between the figures and the subjects
 " themselves, and frequently say ridiculous things." RO-
 BINSON'S *Claude*, c. ii.

lous.

lous.* Figures, which have no ingenuity to recommend them, but are trite and common, ought carefully to be avoided.

Secondly. One of the most glaring vices of bad orators is the exclamation, — “ Oh !

† It would be no very difficult matter to parallel the following specimens, which Dr. Eachard has quoted from the popular orators of his day.

“ ’Tis reported of a tree growing upon the bank of the Euphrates, that it brings forth an apple, to the eye very fair and tempting, but inwardly it is filled with nothing but useless and deceitful dust.—Dust we are, and to dust we must all go.” *Contempt of the Clergy*, p. 62.

“ I cannot omit that of the famous divine, who, advising the people in days of danger to run unto the Lord, tells them, that they cannot go to the Lord, much less run without feet; there are therefore two feet to run to the Lord, *faith* and *prayer*. ’Tis plain that faith is a foot; for, *by faith we stand*. 2 Cor. i. 24. The second is prayer, a spiritual leg to bear us thither: now, that prayer is a spiritual leg, appears from several places of Scripture, as from JONAH, c. ii. v. 7. *and my prayer came unto thy holy temple*,” &c. *Ib.* p. 70.

Upon the text, MATT. iv. 25. *and there followed him great multitudes of people from GALILEE*. “ I discover, (says the preacher,) when JESUS prevails with us, we shall soon leave our GALILEES. I discover also (says he) a great miracle, viz. that the way after JESUS being *strait*, that such a multitude should follow him.” *Ib.* p. 84.

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my beloved Christians!" "Ah! my dear hearers?" "How delightful! how enlivening! how wonderful! how stupendous!" Such unmeaning phrases as these fill up all the blanks of their discourses, and stand in the place of sense and sentiment; to the critical eye, however, they never fail to discover "the nakedness of the land," and to exhibit the preacher labouring at a strain of pathos, which he is not able to effect. There is no figure which is so nearly allied to the frigid as this. It was therefore never admitted by the Greeks, and very rarely by the Roman orators.* It never appears in the discourses of Barrow, of Sherlock, and of Atterbury.—Whether we have improved upon these models or not, the reader will be at no loss to determine.

* See Lord MONBODDO's *Orig. and Prog. of Lang.* vol. iii.

"I know a gentleman, who made it a rule in reading, to skip over all sentences, where he spied a note of exclamation at the end." SWIFT, Lett. to a young Clerg.

Thirdly. It is a poor expedient, and frequently borders on the ridiculous, to introduce interlocutors in a sermon, and make speeches for the different characters. This artifice is generally adopted in order to display the theatrical gesture, and versatile talents of the preacher. It is impossible to see a good *religious facemaker* (as they are termed by the sagacious Dr. Eachard) perform one of these pulpit-farces, without thinking of the strolling player in Scarron, who acted a whole play himself, only varying his position, attitude and voice, according as he represented the King, the Queen, or the Ambassador. These minor orations are commonly very dull paraphrases of some animated passage of Holy Writ, and are sometimes no less inconsistent with decorum, than with the rules of chaste composition.

A fourth device of these flimsy orators, when in a strait for matter or sentiment, (which is often the case,) is to force in a huge Scripture quotation; no matter how
foreign

foreign to the general subject of the discourse : it has an air of piety, and therefore generally imposes on the well-meaning, but undiscerning, part of the audience.

Young orators are generally fond of the sublime to a degree of enthusiasm, and are too apt to affect it when least qualified. They are therefore very liable to deviate into bombast. The marking characters of the bombastic, or false sublime, are : 1st. Words without a distinct appropriate meaning, which the author himself probably could not define, if he were called upon to do it. 2dly. Descriptions, which cannot be reduced to canvass, which exhibit no distinct and uniform picture. 3dly. Similes and figures disproportioned to the subject. 4thly. An abundance of redundant, and unmeaning epithets.

An error apparently opposite to this, but frequently united with it, is the *feeble* style. The characters of this are : 1st. Loose and disjointed sentences, without point or conclusion. 2dly. Common-place imagery and

e 2 expressions.

expressions. 3dly. Colloquial expressions: as, "Well, but says some objector," &c.

One of the most common and the most dangerous errors, however, is the *mock pathos*. Many (I doubt not well-intentioned) persons conceive that they are to go to church for nothing but to weep; and the pitiful methods employed by some preachers to excite their tears cannot fail to have a direct contrary effect with every rational person.* I am sensible that much will, in this case, depend upon the acting of a sermon, (as Dr. Warburton calls it.) I could mention a popular preacher, who regularly weeps at a certain period of his discourse, whether the subject be pathetic or not. The device generally succeeds with that part of the audience (and that is a pretty considerable portion) who pay no atten-

* "A lady asked a certain great person, coming out of church, whether it were not a very *moving* discourse? — "Yes, said he, *I was extremely sorry, for the man is my friend.*" SWIFT, Lett. to a young Clerg.

tion to the matter, and regard only the gesticulation of the preacher. This religious buffoonery, however, must necessarily disgust every judicious hearer; and the censure of one person of sense is, in my opinion, but weakly counterbalanced by the overflowing scale of vulgar popularity.

IV. OF MANNER, OR DELIVERY.

In treating of MANNER, I shall endeavour to contract this dissertation within still narrower limits than I have done on the preceding topics: and for this plain reason, that I conceive it to be the least necessary.

More attention has lately been lavished upon this art, than upon the more substantial objects of criticism; and, after all, the careful observation of good speakers will do more than all the abstract study in the world. Speaking is a practical art, and we might as well pretend to teach a young person to dance, as to speak, by books only.

The principal points to be observed on this subject are MODULATION, EMPHASIS, and ACTION.

First, with respect to MODULATION. It is evident, that the voice naturally assumes a different tone on different occasions. In common conversation, and in narrative, the voice flows in an even tenour, often approaching to monotony. In teaching or explaining, it is slower, more distinct, something more energetic, and rather less inclining to monotony. In extremes of passion, it is unequal, tremulous, and frequently interrupted. The great excellence of art is to reduce those observations, with which we are furnished by nature, to a regular system; and to produce on all occasions, what nature will do in its most perfect state.

The modulation suitable to the pulpit will be sufficiently apparent from these considerations. That violence of passion, which it is the excellence of a player to imitate, cannot possibly have any place there.

there. The preacher's business is to argue, to convince, to persuade, not to storm or rage at his congregation. The raving and furious manner of some preachers may indeed, by mere dint of lungs, keep a congregation from dozing, but can neither inform nor conciliate any person of true taste or real piety.

Apparently opposite to this, though not seldom united in the same person, (for variety is the principal aim of these orators, though it be no more than a variety in absurdity,) is the *whine*. Nothing surely can be more disgusting, nothing more inconsistent with the dignity of a public teacher, than to see a "robustous perriwig-pated fellow," * fobbing like an overgrown school-girl, and copying all the contortions of a player; when, in reality, the occasion for such excessive sorrow, or rather the affectation of it, cannot possibly occur, in a composition altogether of the didactic kind.

* SHAKESPEARE'S Hamlet.

From the nature of his office, from the nature of his composition, the preacher should always, in his enunciation, study "to beget a temperance that may give it a "smoothness."* Nothing can compensate for the loss of dignity; and the strong, energetic, yet temperate and even manner, is alone consistent with true dignity.

Above all things, the young preacher ought most carefully to avoid an unnatural or affected tone. At a period, when, from the frequency of theatrical exhibitions, the taste of the public, with respect to speaking, is much improved, such a defect will scarcely escape the censure of the very ignorant and vulgar. In fact, I never knew of but one instance to the contrary. I remember, some years ago, in a considerable town in the North of England, a person offered himself as a candidate for a living, who performed the service in a tone of voice, which could only be compared to

* Ib.

very bad chanting; it favoured indeed more of the synagogue than of the cathedral; and the composition of his sermon was as unintelligible as his manner was extraordinary. The judicious electors, because the exhibition was uncommon, concluded that it must be something remarkably fine. They afterwards accidentally discovered their mistake, but not till it was too late to rectify it.

Secondly. It is obvious, that every person, in discoursing earnestly upon any subject, usually marks, by a certain force or inflexion of voice, the significant and energetic words and expressions; and, both the number of those expressions, and the force with which they are enunciated, increase in proportion to the passion or vehemence of the speaker.

EMPHASIS is either absolute or relative. Absolute emphasis depends upon the subject, and consists in laying a stress upon such words, as we would wish to be particularly marked, and remembered; such as
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are directly connected with the sense of the whole; and on which it seems, in some degree, to depend.

Relative emphasis has a respect to something immediately going before or coming after, on which the sense of the sentence depends. The whole point and force of the following sentence would be lost by a wrong emphasis: "Philosophy alone can
"boast, (and perhaps it is only the *boast* of
"philosophy,) that her gentle hand is able
"to eradicate from the human mind the
"latent and deadly principle of fanati-
"cism."* "Another servant, being *his*
"kinsman, whose ear Peter cut off;"
here, unless a proper emphasis be laid,
there will be some room for supposing, that
the servant was the kinsman of Peter, and
that he was actually the person, whose ear
had been cut off. In the following lines,
much obscurity may be produced by an im-
proper emphasis:

* GIBBON'S Hist. c. xxv.

"If clouds or earthquakes break not heaven's design,

"Why then a *Borgia* or a *Catiline*?"

Unless the reader remembers, that the word *should* is understood, and reads the verses accordingly, the auditors might suppose the latter line to relate merely to the existence of a *Borgia*, &c.

Sometimes half a sentence is emphatic with respect to the rest. Ex. "The *odia* "in longum jacens, I thought had belonged "only to the *worst* character of *antiquity*." * Unless these three words be pronounced with equal force, the sense of the author will be destroyed, as will be evident by placing the emphasis on either *worst* or *antiquity*, and comparing it with the context.

The great use of emphasis is to render a discourse plain and intelligible to the auditors; and, consequently, that emphasis is most judicious, which is most discriminative. For this reason, I disagree with both

* JUNIUS to Sir W. Draper.

Mr.

Mr. Garrick and Dr. Johnson in their mode of accenting the latter commandments of the Decalogue. * “Thou shalt not steal,” for instance. Here Mr. Garrick placed the emphasis upon the auxiliary verb *shalt*, which was evidently wrong, as Dr. Johnson objected that the commandment was negative; and he accordingly placed the emphasis upon *not*. It is plain, however, that this emphasis neither serves to explain the nature of the commandment, nor to point the attention to its principal object. The congregation are sufficiently aware, that the Decalogue consists of authoritative precepts, and therefore there cannot be the least necessity for dwelling upon the verb *shalt*; most of the commandments are of a negative kind, and of course there can be no occasion to make *not* the principal word in the sentence; and that, too, with a manifest risk that the principal object of the commandment shall not be

* See Sir JOHN HAWKINS's *Life of Dr. Johnson*.

heard,

heard, or at least not attended to. Besides this, we are so accustomed to what I call relative emphasis, that, by accenting either of those words, the ear is naturally led to expect something correspondent to them: thus, by saying "Thou shalt *not* steal," the auditor is induced to expect the antithetical *but*, with some correspondent appendage. The truth is, both these words should be pronounced with a full tone of voice; but, the real force of the emphasis ought to rest upon the word *steal*, or whatever word particularly distinguishes the commandment from the rest.

Thirdly. On the subject of ACTION, I find much to reprehend in most preachers, and I might add in most players also. The most general vice is *unmeaning* action. Mr. Garrick used less action than any performer I ever saw; but his action had always some meaning, it always spoke: and, by making use of less than other actors, it perhaps had the greater force.

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In this case, some respect must be had to the character of the nation, which is gravity; some respect must be had to that which the speaker assumes: and a preacher of the Gospel is certainly the gravest of characters. Much action is expressive of levity, and therefore altogether inconsistent with both these circumstances. Besides, action is in general expressive of great passion, and therefore cannot be required, or even expected in a public speaker, whose business is only to teach or to explain.

Some kinds of action are in themselves ungraceful. I have seen one preacher, whose hands were constantly employed, as if he were digging in the ground; and another, who seemed perpetually hammering nails into the pulpit. I know no attitude so completely disgusting, as what I call the *spread-eagle* attitude, with both wings elevated as if in the action of flying: and I have heard of a certain preacher, who was ludicrously compared to a *tea-pot*, from the affected

affected position in which he commonly addressed the multitude.

The meanest species of buffoonery is that of *acting your words*; and yet I have known this practice confer some degree of popularity. To understand perfectly the absurdity of it, it is only necessary to observe it in excess. What should we think of the person, for instance, who, in reading the following lines, should think proper to represent the actions which they describe?

“ If some more sober critic deign’d to *nod*,

“ If wrong, I *wrote*; if right, I *kiss’d* the rod.”

Or if, in reading the introductory sentence of the Common-Prayer, “ *Rend your hearts,* and not your *garments,*” a clergyman were to mimic these actions, should we not think he meant to ridicule either the liturgy or the congregation. Depend upon it, it is not less essentially absurd, and only differs in degree, when the preacher, every time the heart is mentioned, claps his hand to his

his breast; or, if he reads "the *heavens* declare the glory of god," thinks it necessary to raise his arm, as if pointing to a sign-post.

Every thing like affectation ought to be cautiously avoided. * If a preacher can unite good sense and piety with a style tolerably smooth and harmonious; if his voice be not harsh or disgusting; and if his delivery be easy and unembarrassed, he will find no need of flourishes to render himself agreeable. Few can excel in the higher requisites of oratory: few can be fine speakers; but all may be correct and agreeable speakers, if they will not be too ambitious of being fine speakers. If an orator once lose sight of nature, no exertion of art can compensate for the deviation.

* "Off come the gloves; and, the hands being well chafed, he shrinks up his shoulders, and stretches forth himself as if he were going to cleave a bullock's head, or rive the body of an oak." EACHARD'S *Contempt of the Clergy*.

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It has been frequently debated, whether a sermon may be delivered to most advantage, perfectly extempore, from memory, or from written notes. I have tried all these methods; and, from repeated experience, I do not hesitate to give the preference to the last. In speaking extempore, the mind is too intent upon the matter and the language, to attend to the manner; and, though the emphasis will in general be right, this is more than counterbalanced by the defects in modulation, and by the want of that harmonious and full conclusion of the periods, which may be effected, when we are previously acquainted with the extent of the sentence. In delivering a composition by rote, the memory is so much upon the stretch, that a degree of embarrassment necessarily ensues. The success of the actors, I am aware, will form a strong objection to this observation; but, let it be remembered, the speeches, which they have to commit to memory, are so short, that they will not bear any comparison with the

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delivery

delivery of a long and complex piece of composition: not to mention the aids, which they receive from what is called the *cue*, or the responses of the other characters, and from the constant attention of the prompter.

It was my intention to have concluded with a critical examination of the most approved specimens extant in this species of composition; but I find I have already exceeded my limits, and, I fear, have exhausted the patience of the reader. Indeed I have been compelled, for the sake of brevity, to omit several remarks, which might have been useful to some, and acceptable to many persons; and have confined myself to what I esteemed absolutely necessary.

To revert to a subject, which I formerly declined, because I apprehended it would be more properly introduced in this place. The reader will do me injustice, if he conceives that this dissertation is meant either in apology or in commendation of the discourses which follow. On the contrary,
I do

I do not pretend to say, that my own writings will, in all respects, stand the test of the rules which I have presumed to recommend. Many of these discourses were composed at an early period of life, before I had given that critical attention to the subject, which I have since bestowed upon it; and, after all, there are other qualities besides taste required to form good compositions; and it is easier to conceive of beauty and perfection in the abstract, than practically to excel.

Should it be objected, that I ought to have deferred the publication, unless they appeared perfectly consistent with my notions of excellence, the answer is plain: — that it was possible they might possess some qualities, which, in my estimation, might counterbalance, in some measure, these defects. Thus far, at least, I will venture to allege in their favour, that they are adapted in general to the business of common life, and I think calculated to be practically useful. But it would be tedious and

and impertinent to enter into a minute detail of the motives which determined me to publish, or which influenced my choice in the selection of these discourses. However slender their claim upon the favour of the public, one good end at least will be answered by the publication. The first-fruits of every man's industry ought to be consecrated to his profession; and these sermons, and this dissertation will, I flatter myself, be sufficient to prove, that, whatever my other literary engagements, I have not been wholly inattentive to that object.

ERRORS of the PRESS.

P. 14. line 5. for *catastrophe* read *catastrophes*.

Also, in some of the copies:

P. 271. line 15. for *revert to* read *resent*.

SERMONS,

SERMONS, &c.

SERMON I.

FAITH IN CHRIST A POSITIVE DUTY.*

JOHN VIII. 24.

*If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in
your sins.*

IN so much perplexity and inconsistency do these words, at first sight, appear to be involved, that we are almost tempted to pronounce them *a hard saying*, and to exclaim, with the first auditors of OUR LORD, *who can bear it!* — Is belief, then, dependent

* Preached, at the Asylum, June the 11th, 1786.

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on the will alone? Can I believe just what I determine to believe, and say to my understanding, "be convinced, whether you "have proof sufficient to convince or "not"? If I cannot do this, how should I incur guilt for what is not in my power? and how unjust must the very idea appear of annexing everlasting punishment to a defect of nature, an imbecility of mind, and consequently what can never be considered as an error of the heart?

St. PAUL himself has confessed, that, *without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory:* and are we to wonder, that there should exist minds not vigorous enough to pursue and to comprehend a series of facts, which seem contradictory to all those notions that we have received through the medium of experience? and are not those men rather to be pitied than condemned, who, wanting the higher
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endowments of the understanding, have not been able to elevate their minds to those great intellectual speculations which regard the spiritual world, and which seem necessary in order to conceive rightly of the doctrine — *God made manifest in the flesh.*

But the assertion, contained in the words of my text, seems to imply a contradiction to other parts of Scripture, which inform us, that men shall be judged by their actions, and not by their belief. The voice of inspiration has declared to us : *What is required of thee, O man, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* JESUS CHRIST himself annexes a positive blessing, and even eternal happiness, to the practice of virtue. He gives us a rule of moral conduct, which he assures us is equivalent to the whole of the law and the prophets. *If we love one another,* he tells us, *we are truly his disciples*; and surely we cannot be his disciples, and in a state of reprobation. *True religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father,* says the

apostle, *is this: to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.*

Thus far may be urged, with some degree of plausibility, against the strict and general application of the words in my text. It is indeed inconsistent with the best attributes of the Deity to condemn a creature for an involuntary crime; and I am ready to acknowledge, that belief is not always in the absolute power of the will. But, shall we presume to say, that the will has no power whatever over the understanding? Shall we say that there does not exist a certain perverse species of infidelity, when the understanding is sufficiently inclined to be convinced, but when pride, sensuality, selfishness, malice, or some other corrupt passion, prevents men acknowledging the conviction? Shall we say, in fine, that, if a system of faith be held forth to our acceptance, which many have at first rejected, but, on a deep investigation, have received and acknowledged,

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we are without sin, if, through indolence, conceit, or prejudice, we refuse to bestow upon it that candid attention and examination which its importance merits?

Let us remember, that the words under our consideration were addressed immediately to the JEWS, to *that stiff-necked and stubborn generation*, who had seen the blind restored to sight, the deaf to hearing, the lepers cleansed, and even the dead raised up, by a miraculous power. Can we conceive that men, who were eye-witnesses of such facts as these, could refuse their assent but through a degree of perverseness and contumacy which could not fail to be sinful? and, indeed, for this they are directly reproved by CHRIST: *If I had not done among them the works that none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they no cloak for their sins.*

If we could conceive an unbeliever to exist, who, with an humble and a willing mind, heartily desired and solicited the convictions of grace, who with candour la-

boured to be satisfied, and submitted patiently to the pains of investigation, we have no reason to pronounce such a man (if he demean himself according to the moral precepts of the Christian law, and live in *righteousness, and soberness, and charity*) utterly excluded from the hope of mercy. But, with which of our modern unbelievers is this the case? They are, on the contrary, men, for the most part, *led captive by divers lusts*, who seek in unbelief an excuse for their depravity; or they are men, who, possessed of an overweening opinion of themselves, endeavour ambitiously for renown by differing from others; who would acquire the reputation of learning, sagacity, and wit, by the affectation of singularity.

These persons, who so obstinately reject the testimony of the Scriptures, will receive a fact upon the evidence of a single profane historian, nay, will sometimes give unlimited credit to the most monstrous fictions and absurdities that ever disgraced

disgraced the legends of a barbarous people.* But let any man, with coolness and candour, sit down to the investigation. Let him consider, in all our researches after knowledge, how many things we are obliged to accept upon mere probability. The material world, and all its wonders, are indeed detailed to our view; but, how little do we really understand of the causes which produce this motion, life, order, and disposition, which we daily behold? Let him ask himself if there be any thing more wonderful, in all which the books of Revelation offer to our understanding, than all this which is continually subjected to the apprehension of our senses. Let him remark the feeble efforts of man to account for the origin of this world, the in-

* Nothing can reflect more disgrace on the human understanding than the avidity with which some of the ridiculous fictions of the Chinese, concerning the antiquity of their nation, &c. have been swallowed by some of the modern infidels. Fictions just as worthy of credit as their miraculous stories of *Fohi eating up the moon*, &c.

consistent and visionary theories which philosophers have invented, the eternity of the world, and the fortuitous concourse of atoms. Let him examine well the traces of authenticity which are to be found in the scriptural records even of the earliest periods, and the surprising confirmation of them which is afforded by the best and oldest of the pagan testimonies. Let him compare these with other histories, and with the fabulous accounts which bear a resemblance to them; let him weigh and determine which wears the most striking appearance of probability; let him consider which is the copy, which the imitation, and which the original. Let him assume candour enough to make allowance for the antiquity of those Scriptures; for the imperfect manner in which, at the best, many passages must be understood; the obscurity in which many things must be involved, and the exaggerations with which others must be represented to us, in a style of composition uncommonly bold and poetical, almost

almost totally obsolete at present, and so different from that to which we have been accustomed.

When he has contemplated the great appearance of truth (to speak in the most modest terms) which such an inquiry will reflect upon the ground-work and leading facts of the Scripture-History, let him next advert to the nature and purpose of that revelation for which we contend. Let him remember, that its design is to meliorate, to purify, the soul; to convert men *from every evil word and work*; to diffuse among them the principles of love, of peace, of every virtue conducive to the good of society. Let him turn his eyes upon the conduct of those from whom we received this religion. Let him mark its influence on the morals and the heart. Let him see the same men contending for the facts, *which they had seen and heard*, (facts, in most of which they could not possibly be deceived,) even at the peril of their lives:—blameless men, of the most unimpeachable characters,

characters, and uninfluenced by any temporal or selfish motive, indeed with every such motive in opposition, *resisting unto blood*, and breathing out their last breath in the severest torments, without departing, in the slightest instance, from their former testimony. Let any man of common candour, any man of common sense, patiently sit down to such an investigation as this, and let him rise an infidel if he can.

It is true, indeed, that the Scriptures stipulate a just, a holy, and a moral life, as essential to salvation; but where is this holiness, this integrity, this purity, to be found out of the Christian communion? To allege the purity of heathen morals is an absurdity too gross to be digested by any man conversant in the writings of the heathens. So little consistency is there even in their speculative systems, that scarcely any two of their wise men are agreed respecting the end, or business, of human life. Some placed the chief happiness of man altogether in the gratifications of sense: some in the

the visionary pursuits of ambition and glory: some in total apathy and indifference: and an ancient author has enumerated upwards of *three hundred* different opinions concerning the great or principal constituent of human felicity.* The most unexceptionable of their moralists refuse to the sympathetic feelings, compassion and social affection, the name of virtues; nay, have placed them in the class of foibles, if not of vices. Suicide was tolerated by all, and distinguished as honourable and virtuous by the principal sects of philosophers. The most depraved of passions were not stigmatised as sinful or disgraceful: and the father of *Stoicism*, that system which reflected most honour on unenlightened nature, has not scrupled to apologise for obscenity and lewdness. Peruse with attention the reve-

* For a complete view of these absurd speculations concerning the *summum bonum*, consult LACTANTIUS *de falsa Sapientia*, particularly c. vii. and viii.

ries of Plato and the scepticism of Tully; compare these, the best of the ancient moralists with those who have written under the sanction of Christianity; and mark what human reason, by its own efforts alone, has been able to accomplish.

That those illustrious persons, who, without the light of revealed truth, conformed as far as conscience directed, to the will of their Creator, should fall into condemnation, Christian charity will not allow us to suppose. It is perverse and contumacious infidelity which is reproved, as being highly sinful, in the words of my text: and, when we consider attentively the subject, we cannot but acknowledge, that amiable conduct and virtuous actions can scarcely, in the nature of things, be consistent with such principles,

If we examine, with the most candid dispositions, the lives of those who have contumeliously shaken off the yoke of CHRIST, shall we find reason thence to retract this conclusion? The man, who
proposes

proposes to himself no motive but temporal interest, or, at most, a certain mysterious notion of beauty and harmony, may indeed be coolly and deliberately good; but, in the tumult of passion, in the crisis of temptation, will he not see other interests which may impose upon his senses? Will not his ideas of beauty alter? Will not the power of fashion, the fascinating influence of the multitude, disturb the even tenour of his conduct?

As from the pernicious opinions and the graceless lives of the generality of unbelievers, so may the good providence of GOD protect all in this assembly from the bitterness of that death which is without hope in CHRIST. — It is not in the bloom and vigour of health, — it is in the hour of adversity, of sickness, in the dark and gloomy moments which precede his dissolution, — that the tenets of the infidel are put to their proper test. The scene may indeed, in some instances, have been tolerably acted, where vigour and strength of nerves might
in

in some degree support the despairing spirit, or when shame of the world, or the unbounded love of literary fame, prevented the disclosure of their real feelings. But the fatal catastrophe of some of the most noted unbelievers afford a most striking and alarming lesson, and a most powerful antidote against the contagion of their sentiments.

Without entering into the abstruse speculations concerning *faith* and *works*, I must confess, that, on the principles of common sense, I am unable to separate them. I do not see how it is possible to attain any high degree of moral perfection but on the principles of faith in CHRIST. On the other hand, I must consider every immoral action, in a professing Christian, so far an instance of infidelity. If you believe the Gospel, you must believe the promises of the Gospel; if the promises, the threatenings also. To illustrate the position by a very plain example: — Suppose yourself proceeding in some trackless waste, unconscious and unsuspecting

suspecting of evil ; and suppose some friendly spirit, in such a situation, to accost you, and to warn you that a precipice lies directly before you, or that some immediate difficulty or danger impends over your head. If you have any reliance on the truth of his information, any confidence in his integrity, — in plain terms, if you believe him, you will alter your course. Thus, if CHRIST has assured you, that, by the irrevocable decree of Almighty GOD, eternal punishment be annexed to the practice of certain vices ; if you believe in CHRIST, it is impossible to continue in the practice of these vices ; and if, in this sense, you do not believe in his divine authority and mission, you then, literally, and to all intents and purposes, *die in your sins*.

S E R M O N

inspecting of evil, and supposing
 finally that in such a situation, to account
 you, and to warn you that a typhoon has
 directly before you, or that some further
 state of the day or danger is ahead over your
 head. If you have any reliance on the
 truth of his information, any confidence in
 his integrity, explain to him, if you be-
 lieve him, you will direct your course.
 If not, if you have heard him say that
 by the terrible doctrine of Almighty God,
 that if you will, you may be damned to the eter-
 nal of eternities; if you believe in
 certainty, it is impossible to continue in the
 practice of these vices, and if in the
 instant you do not believe in his divine in-
 fluence, and without any other, finally,
 and to all intents and purposes, he is your
 enemy, and you are his enemy.

S E R M O N II.

THE CHARACTERS OF THE INFIDEL AND THE
ENTHUSIAST COMPARED. *

I COR. VIII. 1.

Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

THAT real knowledge should be the object of the apostolic censure is not easy to believe, or that it could be meant by such a reproof to check or to retard our progress in substantial improvement. True wisdom has virtue for its object; humility and urbanity are its inseparable companions. The best-informed of the ancients confessed, that the happiest effect of their learning was, that it enabled them to feel their own ignorance and incapacity: and the most enlightened minds have ever been the most candid.

* Preached, at RICHMOND, in Surrey, October the 12th, 1783.

C

There

There is no greater mistake than to suppose human learning inconsistent with the tenets of those who assert the truth and necessity of divine revelation. Not to speak of the dispensation of nature, which gave us these intellectual faculties certainly with the intent that they should not be unemployed, the importance of wisdom, and its alliance with virtue, is openly asserted in almost every page of Scripture.* The choice of Solomon was approved by the Almighty, when he preferred the gifts of wisdom and understanding to all the common ingredients of earthly felicity. God, by the mouth of his holy prophet, complains, *my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* The scribes, and the presuming sectaries of the Jewish church, are reproved by our blessed LORD: *Ye do err, not KNOWING the Scriptures and the power of God.* In fine, the gifts of the Spirit seemed principally

* See the Proverbs of Solomon, passim, and all the didactic writings in both the Old and New Testament.

intended

intended to compensate the want of temporal assistance; that knowledge and eloquence, which a confined education had denied to the first teachers of our religion, was supplied by a miracle: and yet *the chosen vessel of God* was a man, who superadded to the divine inspiration, with which he was so copiously endowed, every assistance which human instruction could afford.

If we attend to the circumstances under which the Epistle was composed, and observe carefully the former part of the verse from which I have selected the words of my text, it will appear highly probable that something is there implied like an ironical censure of the upstart pride of certain new converts in the church of Corinth. *We know*, says the apostle, *that we all have knowledge*. We all have, or think we have, knowledge. *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth*. Certain it is, that real knowledge can neither merit nor provoke so bitter a sarcasm; and the apostle's observation can only apply to that confused, ill-

afforted, smattering kind of knowledge; which has for its motive vanity, for its object the blind and silly admiration of the vulgar and the weak.

Among the various pretenders to religious knowledge, there are two characters, which, as the two extremes, are generally considered in opposition to each other; but which, however they may seem to differ, are in principle much alike; and in one particular are too fatally agreed, namely, in the subversion of real piety and essential virtue. It is difficult to say, whether pride and presumption be more particularly the characteristics of the infidel or of the enthusiast. The one believes himself qualified by nature to decide arbitrarily on every thing; and, what his shallow judgement cannot immediately comprehend, he thinks himself at liberty to treat with ridicule and contempt. On the other hand, the enthusiast is apt to fancy that he is the peculiar favourite of heaven, and enlightened by the Spirit of God himself. If he has not particular

ticular revelations, he is at least certain that he is possessed of some sources of information so much superior to the wisdom of the rest of mortals, that they can only be the effects of a secret inspiration. In the pride of his heart, not content with looking down on the rest of mankind as infinitely his inferiors, he affects a familiarity with his omnipotent Creator: and, while he pursues the illusions of a distracted imagination, he thinks he has tasted at the very fountain of truth, and that he is selected from among the sons of men to be the chief dispenser of the divine ordinances.

Each of these characters has a perfect reliance on his own righteousness. The one rejects every aid of divine truth; the other relies altogether on an imaginary predilection of the Deity, and expects to reach the mansions of blessedness without a single effort of his own. The one presumes upon his exquisite taste for moral beauty and decorum, which however he reserves as a mystery only understood by himself, and

never displays to the world in his practice; the other rejects the name as well as the substance of morality, and hopes confidently for salvation through a barren and unprofitable faith, which is not the parent of a single virtue. The one extols his own disinterestedness, which enables him now and then to perform an action not entirely selfish, without (as he tells you) the sordid expectation of future reward; the other veils his selfishness under the pretence that good works are not essential to salvation, that a prayer is better than an alms-deed, and a ghostly exhortation a more generous office than a well-directed benefaction.

Each is a resolute despiser of others. The unbeliever is extremely lavish of the epithets, selfish, ignorant, and hypocritical; the pharisee *thanks his God that he is not as other men are*. The clergy are equally the scorn and detestation of each. The sagacious infidel shrewdly discovers, that they are no better than a set of drones who prey upon the industrious part of the community; that

that a body of men, whose interest it is to conceal the truth, can never serve to promote real science; that priests have, in all ages, been grasping and ambitious; that they have subverted empires, disturbed the peace of families, persecuted and opposed (he will not add, *sometimes confuted*) such liberal and acute reasoners as himself. On the other hand, the fanatic saint is a jealous inspector into the morals of the clergy. Secretly disaffected to the government of our church, he industriously endeavours to find a flaw in our demeanour. Every the smallest frailty is magnified into an offence of the most portentous aspect. "It is for the honour of CHRIST to expose unworthy and hypocritical priests." A gloomy and captious temper has jaundiced his eye, and even virtues are faults under his inspection. Is the victim of his animadversion humble and condescending? "He is a fawning hypocrite, a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Is he possessed of a sense of dignity, and conscious

of his virtue? "He is a high-priest, and
"above that humble demeanour which
"becomes the disciple of CHRIST." Has
he erudition or abilities? "He trusts only
"to human learning, and is ashamed of
"the Gospel." Does he endeavour to in-
form his hearers with a knowledge of the
social and domestic duties? "He is a mere
"moral preacher, and studies only the
"doctrines of paganism." Is he argu-
mentative? "He is dry or declamatory:"
and some fantastical mystic, without edu-
cation or principle, who has tacked toge-
ther a few incoherent patches of Gentile
philosophy,* and adorned them with a dia-
lect as motley as the matter, shall bear
away the palm from the most accomplished
preacher.

* There is not a tenet of the modern mystics which is
not borrowed from the Gnostic heresy; and that was altoge-
ther founded on the reveries of the Eastern magi, with a
few of the most absurd doctrines of Platonism. These prin-
ciples have been transmitted from the first ages of the
church, by a series of fanatics, to the present times.

Each

Each has a jargon peculiar to himself; a science of words, which he substitutes for ideas. Our profound philosopher pretends to measure earth and heaven, to know the springs of nature and the first movements of the material world. He gives names to effects, and imagines the cause quite within the scope of his comprehension. The secret counsels of the Deity, the most remote decrees of the divine Providence, are, if you will credit them, perfectly apprehended by some presuming enthusiasts. They can limit the unbounded freedom of the divine will; they can define Omnipotence; they can judge his justice, and penetrate his most awful mysteries. The infidel affects to believe nothing but what, by his imperfect faculties, he understands, or pretends to understand; the enthusiast approves nothing, thinks nothing worth knowing, but what passes man's understanding: and, while he eagerly presses forward to what *angels have desired to look into in* vain,

vain, the duties of a man are beneath his attention.

To caution any in this assembly against the absurdities of the former character would, I trust, be unnecessary. Those of the latter are more consistent with uprightness of intention. A splenetic disposition, a mistaken zeal, circumstances or occasions, or natural vanity, may frequently expose a good heart, especially if united with a weak understanding, to the fatal infection. It is therefore my duty briefly to point out the means of avoiding a false and overweening opinion of ourselves in what respects religion, and to impress upon your minds the great utility of the apostolic reflexion: *Knowledge* (such knowledge as I have been describing) *puffeth up, but charity edifieth.*

In the first place, let us beware of fancying ourselves more righteous than the rest of mankind; and let us, if we wish to form a true estimate of our own deserts, judge

judge by our actions, and not by our opinions. The Gospel informs us, that, *without holiness, no man can see the Lord; that every one that nameth the name of Christ must depart from iniquity.* The *slothful servant* was cast into outer darkness; and yet we are assured, that, when we have done all we can, we are but *unprofitable servants*; that is, we have barely performed our duty. A false confidence in our own virtue and piety not only excludes repentance, but improvement: besides that pride will generally be found to accompany it, as well as a want of charity; and to want charity is to want every essential of real Christianity. It is departing widely from the example, as well as from the precepts, of the meek and lowly JESUS, to be severe or illiberal in our reflexions upon our fellow-mortals. He was merciful and candid towards his creatures; instead of exposing, he wept over, their vices: and it is remarkable, there are scarcely any sins which he openly reproves but spiritual pride and
affected

affected sanctity. St. Paul assures us, that, though we had *the gift of prophecy*, all other virtues, and *all knowledge*, and have not *charity*, it *profiteth nothing*. Virtue and wisdom are generally mild and condescending; but little minds are always captious and conceited. Let me add, (and I speak it with all possible caution,) I have seldom known a good and sincere Christian who took pleasure in defaming or reviling the clergy. Perhaps it would be for the interests of religion, if even some degree of respect were to be paid where it is not altogether deserved; but this is an indulgence we do not look for at your hands; all we demand are the common rights of mankind, truth, honesty, and candour. When lucrative rewards are not the lot of the studious and industrious pastor, it is surely hard to deny him the gratification and pleasure of knowing that his endeavours are well accepted. Nay, with regard to yourselves, the matter is not quite indifferent. That captious and discontented disposition, which

which expects more from human nature than it is reasonable to expect, which magnifies petty omissions into enormous offences, which is only happy in the pursuit and discovery of blemishes and errors, or which creates faults where there are none, is by no means a disposition adapted to moral and religious improvement. Distrust, therefore, the inspiration or the emotion which is accompanied with a malevolent sensation, for it cannot come from GOD. Let your zeal, on every occasion, be according to knowledge, and Knowledge proceed hand in hand with her sister, Charity. There is no action of life that requires so much caution in the performance as censure. "Censure," says a finished writer, "is in season so very seldom, that it may be compared to that bitter plant which hardly comes to maturity in the life of a man, and is said to flower but once in a hundred years."

Secondly. Beware of the temptation of fancying yourself wiser, or better informed, in

in spiritual concerns, than the rest of mankind. *Except ye become as little children, ye can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.* The pretence of imparting superior knowledge was the artifice of Satan to undo our first parents: nor is there any reason to believe him now less active in inspiring us with a false opinion of our own judgements, and in filling us with pride, fastidiousness, and contempt for others. I am far from wishing to restrain a well-directed ardour in that most important of studies, that which respects our eternal salvation. I would only recommend, that this and every other work of religion should be accompanied with a proper sense of our own weakness and unworthiness. When humility is lost sight of, it is to be feared that truth will not long remain in view. In the frame of God's creation, there are many mysteries which the profoundest naturalist is unable to unravel: and, though the Scriptures be, in general, a plain and intelligible guide to happiness and virtue, yet (as St. Peter well observes)

observes) they contain *some things, which the ignorant and unstable wrest to their own damnation.* The most exalted understandings, in whom the lamp of piety shone with the most unblemished lustre, aided by the most perfect knowledge of the original languages, and enlightened by all the information to be collected from collateral historians, (both which, give me leave to observe, are indispensibly necessary to enable us to determine, with any degree of probability, on the difficult passages of Scripture,) have at last confessed themselves but as babes, and have exclaimed, with David, *such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it.* But let not this, my brethren, abate our veneration for the sacred volume; it inculcates maxims, and enforces duties, for which every reasonable being has a capacity and a natural relish; in the observance of which, however, there are few but are some way deficient. Instead, therefore, of bewildering our minds in the pursuit of visionary science; let us attend to what all
may

may perfectly understand. *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth: for, if any man think he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.* If we cannot be angels in comprehension, let us be Christians in practice. Let us be thankful to Almighty God for that share of useful knowledge which he has been so bountiful as to impart, and which, in his proper season, he will enlarge. Let us remember, and let it check our presumption: *The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, hast thou an arm like God, and canst thou thunder with a voice like his? — How unsearchable are his judgements, says the apostle, and his ways past finding out!*

SERMON

S E R M O N I I I .

ON THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND
LAZARUS. *

LUKE XVI. 23, 24.

And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame.

SO severe a sentence can scarcely fail to excite our attention, and to attract an inquiry into the nature of the crime.

* Preached, at the Foundling Hospital, March, 1785.

For the general outline of this Sermon I am indebted to MASSILLON. It is, however, no more than an imitation, and that a very free one, of the French orator. Probably the original may be much superior ; for it is, I think, without exception, the best sermon in the French language : it would, however, have been too long for an English audience, if literally translated.

D

This

This suffering sinner, — Has he *bowed the knee to Baal*? Has he deserted or blasphemed the GOD of his fathers? Has he imbrued his merciless hands in the blood of the innocent? Has he feasted on the spoils of the fatherless and widow? — Attend but to his moans, ye men of the world, you who imagine that a soft and luxurious life is a life of innocence, and that barely not to do evil is fulfilling the Gospel.

There was, says our blessed LORD, *a certain rich man*. — But he has added nothing odious or disgraceful to this circumstance. He has not told us that this man was indebted for his riches to flattery or any criminal means; or that he enjoyed with infolence what by baseness he had acquired. The silence of Scripture justifies us on this head. — *He was rich*. — He expended his wealth in a round of peaceful enjoyments; free from ambition, encircled with pleasures, exempt from care: and how few are there at this day in the world who possess the goods of fortune in more innocent circumstances?

cumstances? Nevertheless, mark the first cause of his reprobation! *He was rich.*

He was clothed in purple and fine linen.

Yet we do not learn that in his pomp he exceeded the limits of his revenue; that the tradesman or artificer were sufferers by his ostentation and extravagance: we do not learn that he regarded his equals or inferiors with an eye of contempt, or that rapine was employed to nourish his vanity.

He was clothed in purple and fine linen. — He loved parade and magnificence; and that, too, in an age when every thing contributed to this passion; when Religion herself was apparelled in the most gorgeous attire; and when piety was believed in a great measure to consist in a splendid temple, and in the majesty and sublimity of exterior ceremonies.

He fared sumptuously every day, continues the parable. But the law of Moses had not, as yet, imposed that rigid temperance which the purity of our religion recommends. *A land flowing with milk and honey*

was one of the first promises made to the seed of Abraham, and one of their chief inducements to obedience. Nor do we find that this rich man is accused of having transgressed the law in this point, of having eaten of those viands the Jewish law-giver had prohibited, or broken through the rules of abstinence his religion had prescribed. *He fared sumptuously.*—Yet we have no absolute authority to charge him with gluttony. We are not informed that drunkenness or profaneness waited on his repasts, or that slander or ridicule made a part of the entertainment; that from one scene of debauchery he rushed to another; that he added avarice to voluptuousness, and sallied from the board of intemperance to the gaming-table; that he there associated with the most abandoned among mankind, and on the cast of a die hazarded that which ought to have afforded subsistence to poor and industrious multitudes, that with which he was intrusted for very different purposes.

In

In fine, he is not upbraided with impiety or irreligion. He is not called a cruel master, an undutiful child, a faithless husband, or a perfidious friend. He is not said to have made use of his riches to corrupt the integrity of others; to seduce and ruin unguarded innocence; to vex and distress his neighbour, to obstruct his projects, or disconcert his measures. He was not envious or insatiable. He lived a life of ease and luxury; such a life as is conformable to the notions of those whom we denominate men of the world: a life, compared with that of many among us, blameless;—I should say, praise-worthy.

To this state of the question you will doubtless oppose his hard-heartedness towards Lazarus, his insensibility to the sufferings of those beneath him. You will assert your own title to the mercy and favour of God, since you have ever attended to the lamentations of distress. — You have bestowed much in charity. — To this I answer, such a conduct is not without its me-

rits; but charity is of a still more extensive nature. Unless you possess a soul *meek, gentle, patient, not vaunting itself, not puffed up; though you give half your goods to feed the poor, and though you give your body to be burned, it profiteth nothing.* Alms-giving is indeed a necessary duty, but it does not involve the whole system of Christian benevolence. However, let us inquire a little further into the crime of this unhappy though rich man, and perhaps we shall find ourselves scarcely less culpable.

There was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Here is indeed a picture, at which the indignant spirit of humanity at once catches the alarm, and every virtuous affection of the soul is excited to pity and to condemn. The rich, voluptuous, and sensual man, seated at his table that overflows with delicacies, and insensible to the misery of a fellow-creature, who is reduced to wish for a few crumbs to
appease

appease the sharpness of his hunger, — this is indeed a sight monstrous in the eyes of Religion and Charity. Nevertheless, if we examine a little more accurately, we shall find that our Lord does not represent the conduct of the rich man as an extraordinary and astonishing instance of barbarity, but as the ordinary proceeding of persons in a similar situation; the proceeding, in short, of a man careless, indolent, and unreflecting.

Lazarus was a common *beggar*; and men are usually less touched with the wretchedness of these, than with the indigence of those who only petition in secret. We are apt to persuade ourselves, that their importunities are only artifices to attract the attention of the wealthy. In short, most of those considerations, which render us deaf to the intreaties of the common mendicants and wanderers that appear about our doors, might serve, in like manner, to make him deny the request of Lazarus: and so far may serve in excuse for that

want of common compassion, of which we are perhaps too ready to accuse him.

Lazarus *was laid at his gate full of sores.* Such an object, though it may draw a tear from the eye of reflexion, is not always equally successful in working on the feelings of others. Such an object, laid daily at their gate, would offend the delicacy and provoke the indignation of many of the *rich men* of the present age. They would order the odious spectacle to be driven from their sight, and some insolent minister of their cruelty would add reviling to disappointment. But we do not read that the rich man in the parable so much as made use of an intemperate expression.

Nor are we even informed that Lazarus made a personal application to the rich man. He *desired, or wished, to be fed with the crumbs.*—He perhaps was silent, and left his affliction, his infirmities, his sores, to plead for him: while the rank and engagements of the rich man did not allow him leisure to reflect on the misery of a poor
beggar,

beggar. And for this Abraham reproves him, as, one day or other, all the thoughtless and inattentive sons of pleasure and dissipation will be reprov'd at *the judgement-seat of Christ*: *Lazarus was naked, and you clothed him not; he was sick, and you visited him not; he was an-hungered, and you administered not to him.* — Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

You, who have not as yet tasted the bitter draught of adversity; you, whose desires are gratified at a wish; you, *who say to your soul, eat, drink, and be merry, there is much good laid up for thee for many years*; you, who live for yourself, and take no thought for the sufferings of others; — Should you, after this, be led to inquire to whom the parable under our consideration is address'd, I answer, as the prophet to the king, *thou art the man.* — Thou hast overstepp'd the frugality and simplicity of thy ancestors; thou hast received *thy good things,*

things, and thou hast made them subservient only to the gratification of thy passions; thou hast laid the foundations of thy happiness upon earth; there hast thou built a city; there hast thou placed thy utmost confidence. Come, then, and aid me while I shift the scene; while, with the evangelist, we pursue this thy predecessor to that after-state, where he is no longer clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares no longer sumptuously, as he was wont. Attend, therefore, to the conclusion of the parable: *It came to pass that the beggar died: —* oppressed with years, with sickness, and with penury, he sinks beneath the burthen of calamity, and is conveyed, without pomp or solemnity, to the silent grave. But mark the change! *He was carried, by the angels, into Abraham's bosom;* to those regions of bliss, the final reward of virtue, fortitude, and patience. There his tears are wiped away, his afflictions are consoled, his poverty is enriched, his humility is glorified, and his penitence rewarded with eternal felicity.

The

The rich man also died, and was buried. Behold, then, every mark of ostentation and magnificence which can accompany that last sad solemnity. The whole city is in motion; his vast possessions are the theme of universal conversation; his profusion and liberality are every where extolled: a train of affected mourners attend his bier; his relations strive to eternise his fame by pompous titles and inscriptions engraven upon brass and marble: — in vain; for all his glory must die with him. His very name is not handed down to us: *For the memory of the wicked perisheth with him*, says the wise man; *and those, who have sought wealth and honours, are passed away*, says the son of Sirach, *and are become as though they had never been born.* But, though sin is of this perishable nature here below, it is of but too fatal a duration in another state: for, the next place, in which we find the rich man, is *hell*: *and in hell he lifted up his eyes, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; and he cried, and said, Father*

ther Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame. Such an image is too tremendous to dwell upon, and indeed I trust there are none among you so insensible as to require it to be heightened by the colouring of rhetoric. Let us, therefore, once more revert to the first object of this discourse, namely, an inquiry into the chief cause of his condemnation : and this appears, beyond all possibility of dispute, no other than a LIFE OF INDOLENCE, THOUGHTLESSNESS, EFFEMINACY, AND LUXURY ; a life, unmarked with great crimes, but destitute also of virtues. Now, if such a punishment awaited the disciple of Moses, under a gross and carnal law, — what ! think you that the disciple of CHRIST, under a law which is purity and spirituality itself, will be more favourably received than the rich voluptuary under the Jewish dispensation ? We are commanded *to be perfect, even as our FATHER, who is in heaven,*

ven, is perfect. We have an example, which we are bound to follow, our great and blessed Master. But is it imitating him, my brethren, merely not to commit adultery, murder, sacrilege? Are these the bounds of Christian virtues? Was CHRIST content with doing wrong to no man, with paying tribute to Cesar, with not being accused of any enormous sin? Did he not subdue and mortify all earthly affections? Did he not pray for his enemies? Did he not *go about doing good*? Was he not *meek and lowly of heart*, simple, disinterested, exact to fulfil the law to the minutest point? Did he *love the world*; he, who contradicted, fought, and overcame it? Did he promise salvation to the worldly; he, who has so repeatedly condemned them? Did he declare in favour of riches; he, who has execrated them? In favour of honours and dignities; he, who so studiously, so constantly, avoided them? In favour of pleasures; he, who despised them?

Behold,

Behold, then, our model ! and rest assured, that, in prosperity or adversity, in a court or in a cloister, unless we bear his image in our hearts, and are conformed to his likeness, we are in a situation but little preferable to that of the rich, but unfortunate, person, who has been the subject of this exhortation.

SERMON

S E R M O N IV.

ON THE NATURE OF HUMAN HAPPINESS, AND THE
MEANS OF ATTAINING IT. *

PROV. XIX. 3.

*The foolishness of man perverteth his way,
and his heart fretteth against the Lord.*

PASSION, like an unskilful artist, seldom presents us with any but the most deformed of portraits. In the gloomy moments of spleen, or amidst the keen anguish of disappointment, the medium through which we speculate is clouded and confused; it distorts while it magnifies. In this uncomfortable state of mind, men have not failed to represent the world, and every fair and flourishing object which it contains, in the most disgusting colours. They have depreciated its beauties; they have magni-

* Preached at St. Anne's, Westminster, in September, 1785.

fied its deformities. All the powers of fancy, and all the pomp of words, have been exhausted in the laudable task of persuading us, that we are naturally and irretrievably miserable, that *all is vanity and vexation of spirit*. And it must be confessed, that these morose and misanthropical spirits have, at least, fully enjoyed one gratification, the only one indeed of which their natures appear capable, that of believing, that the whole mass of mankind is destined to experience the same unpleasing sensations that haunt and distract their miserable bosoms.

It is remarkable, however, that most of the instances, which are produced of disappointment in the pursuit of happiness, are taken from the conduct of the vicious or the imprudent. Thus Solomon, in enumerating the employments, which led him to the melancholy conclusion we have already noticed, scarcely mentions any one that was laudable and virtuous. *I said, I will prove thee with MIRTH; therefore enjoy pleasure. I sought in my heart to give*

give myself unto WINE, and to lay bold on folly. I made me great WORKS, I builded me HOUSES, I planted me VINEYARDS. I got me SERVANTS and MAIDENS, also great POSSESSIONS of GREAT and SMALL CATTLE. I gathered me also SILVER and GOLD, and the peculiar treasure of kings. I got me MEN-SINGERS and WOMEN-SINGERS, and the delights of the sons of men. — Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy. Here it is obvious, that every enjoyment, which he has specified, is of a sensual and worldly nature; and, though, in the course of the description, the royal preacher sometimes adverts to his love of wisdom, or, more properly, of science, yet it is certain, that such a pursuit is very inconsistent with the indulgence of licentious pleasures, and very unable to afford satisfaction amidst the tumults of passion and the enervating influence of continued dissipation; and a little experience will easily convince us, that the man, who *seeks to give himself unto WINE, and withholds*

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not his heart from any joy, will find but little opportunity, however he may retain the inclination, for the improvement of his intellectual powers.

But, because happiness is not to be attained by the acquisition of wealth, by the joys of conviviality, or the blandishments of pleasure, shall we rashly conclude, that its existence upon earth is altogether chimerical and delusive? Shall the restlessness and dissatisfaction of the man of the world, or even those inconveniences and afflictions, which are sometimes the lot of the best of characters, lead us to consider happiness or enjoyment altogether as an imaginary phantom, that unceasingly encourages and invites our approach, but as unceasingly eludes our embrace? Surely, though the wilderness of the world presents to the traveller many intricate and perplexing paths, still it must be confessed that it affords some pleasant spots, calculated not only for his repose and refreshment, but for his comfort and delight. God, indeed, has not ordained that

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we should find in this terrestrial habitation our abode and rest, and consequently has mingled our highest worldly enjoyments with such a degree of imperfection as may serve to impress this great truth effectually upon our hearts; but, on the other hand, he has provided us with such blessings and comforts as may enable us to go through our pilgrimage with cheerfulness and gratitude. He intended not to make our probation an uninterrupted scene of affliction, or that men should arrive at glory only through the avenues of wretchedness and pain.

If we turn our eyes upon the virtuous part of the world, though it is not pretended that human life is or ought to be exempt from calamities, we shall find that happiness greatly preponderates on the whole. Let us consider but a few of those innumerable sources of pleasure, which our HEAVENLY FATHER has opened for us with a liberal hand. Consider the various advantages of science; the instant delight

that results from the successful investigation and discovery of truth ; the sublime pleasure of those high speculations that lead to the contemplation of infinite wisdom and goodness ; the sweet and varied amusement, in the inspection of this vast chain of natural objects ; the refined sensations, which attend the diligent study of moral beauty and fitness ; the heart-felt satisfaction which accompanies the well-meant endeavour to enlighten and to meliorate our fellow-mortals ; the enchanting prospect, which is afforded by a close and attentive view of the increasing virtue of a good and wise man, even in this imperfect state, in the expectation that his faculties will be still further enlarged in that which is to come, and that, in succeeding ages, he will keep advancing *from glory to glory*.

It will perhaps be objected, that those enjoyments, which ensue from the exercise of our intellectual faculties, are necessarily confined to a few, and therefore by no means applicable to the present argument.

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But, in reality, these form a very small part of those delights, of which our Creator has made us capable. Ask the benevolent man, what were his sensations when the thankful eye dropped a tear of joy, or when the overcharged bosom heaved with silent gratitude? Inquire from him, whether he has not experienced true happiness in assisting the distressed, in comforting the dejected, in protecting the oppressed, in receiving *the blessing of him who was ready to perish?*

This, however, would prove but little, if it led us to suppose happiness and pleasure confined to the superior classes of mankind. The truth is, there are few states of life, in which virtue and industry will not insure a moderate portion of enjoyment. Let us inquire whether the humble cottager finds existence altogether joyless and insipid. View him, surrounded by his poor indeed, but happy, circle of friends, by his healthy and innocent offspring, with the dear partner of his life, by whom every

joy is increased, every sorrow is alleviated. Does the morning call him to labour? It is for the support of those who are dearer than himself. Do the evening shades approach? They are the sweet harbingers of domestic joy. He finds in labour an exemption from that spleen and chagrin which poison the happiness of others; and derives from toil not only subsistence, but health.

It will perhaps be said, again, that these are little better than poetical and imaginary descriptions, or, at most, the pictures of individual prosperity; that it would be more philosophical to enumerate the particular sources of happiness, and to set them in opposition to the evils of life. Even here, were there time or opportunity, or were it possible to complete a catalogue which is almost endless, I am persuaded the argument would not fail us. Gloomy indeed, and scarcely human, must be that breast, which refuses to acknowledge the exhilarating influence of social intercourse; the pleasures

pleasures of a well-earned reputation ; or the inexpressible delights of virtuous friendship. Every elegant improvement of art, every beautiful and interesting object of nature, presents us with something to cheer our spirits, to unbend our minds, or to diversify our pursuits and enjoyments. But, superior to all these, there is a source of pleasure, my brethren, which (though hitherto but slightly glanced at in this discourse) I doubt not you have very frequently adverted to ; and that is, a holy confidence and faith in the good providence of our GOD and in the mercies of our REDEEMER. The benighted understanding or the unfeeling heart, that ascribes to blind chance the disposal of events, may, with reason, murmur or complain. The Christian is a stranger to such inconsistencies. He sees his GOD in every part of nature ; he feels his directing hand in its minutest operations. His life is one continued series of admiration, of gratitude, of hope, of all those amiable passions which

are the true sources of whatever felicity we can enjoy on this side the grave.

Our utility in this life (and consequently our claim to another) depends so much upon our forming a just estimate of the powers with which we are entrusted for the good of ourselves and others, that it is of importance to examine and to refute every erroneous principle which may in any respect affect the conduct of mankind. Of this nature is the fallacious maxim, "that human happiness consists merely in hope:" a maxim not totally devoid of foundation, but by no means true in the extent in which it is commonly understood. The proposition seems to rest upon an ancient error, namely, the supposition that human happiness consisted chiefly in a state of apathy or inaction. Now the direct contrary is the case, and man is never happy but when his faculties are employed. A state of hope is a state of engagement, of agitation, and activity; the state, when we have attained our wishes, is a state of indolence

lence and stillness. . Hope is, therefore, in general, a happier state than possession, because it disposes to activity ; but the axiom, " that *all* human felicity consists in " hope," is by no means well founded ; and, a more accurate way of expressing ourselves would be to say, that every passion, which engages the mind in some laudable employment, or pursuit, contributes to the happiness of man, since he is then fulfilling the will of his CREATOR and the end of his creation.

But, having, I trust, sufficiently evinced that happiness is, in a considerable degree, the lot of humanity, even in this imperfect state, let us, in the next place, proceed to a brief inquiry concerning that plan and system of conduct, which appears most conducive to its attainment : that our hearts, no longer *perverted* by folly and illusion, may cease wantonly and wickedly to *murmur against the Lord*.

I. In the first place, therefore ; it was, I think, evidently proved, in the former part of
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of this discourse, that the general cause of mortification and unhappiness among mankind has been the fixing of their affections upon objects which were unworthy their regard, and expecting enjoyment from sources whence it was not to be derived according to the nature of things. I must consequently recommend to you to be particularly cautious on what principles you set out in your pursuit of happiness, and to be certain that they are right. It has been objected to the Gospel-system of morality, that it neglects the blessings of the present life through a romantic attention to those of a future, and intercepts the gratification of those passions, with which the Almighty has endued us. Now, on the other hand, the best philosophy even of the heathens has asserted, and I think has proved, that on the moderating and restraining of those very passions depends the chief, if not the whole, of human happiness: and I am convinced, that no rules so rational or so effectual can be devised, for the regulation

lation of the passions, as those with which we are furnished by the Gospel of CHRIST. — My advice is, therefore, on this rock to ground the basis of your happiness. What though the Gospel command you not to *set your affections on the things of this world, but to deny yourself, and to give to the poor* : — The more disinterested you are, the fewer objects you will find to disconcert or to destroy the tranquility of your soul. What though it enjoin you to meet evil and persecution with cheerfulness : — Would you gain any thing by receiving them with murmurs and complaints ? What though it recommend to you *to love your enemies* : — Could there be devised a better method to prevent your having any ? The longer you live, and the more strictly you examine these injunctions, the more of truth and wisdom you will find in them. — Yes, my brethren, it is happiness *not to love the world* ; it is happiness *to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts* ; it is happiness *to be humble*. The Gospel will instruct you,
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not only what to do, but what to desire. This man, for instance, prays that he may obtain riches; you, who are a disciple of CHRIST, pray that you may not covet them. This man's state and condition is uneasy to his human feelings, and he prays to be released from it; but you, pray to GOD to give you strength and grace to bear your condition. Some pray that they may live long; but you, pray that you may not fear to die:

II. Next to your duty to God, let me recommend to you to determine seriously on fulfilling those duties, which you owe to your fellow-creatures; and one of the first of these is constant, useful, and laudable employment. Indolence produces spleen, repining, and despair; but activity is the parent of vigour, content, and enjoyment. It removes us from vice; it conducts us to virtue. It is not only essential to health, but almost to life itself. Complaints of the tediousness of existence proceed not from the lowly abodes of the industrious poor,

poor, but from the lofty palaces of the slothful. The SAVIOUR of the world has recommended activity to us, both by his precepts and example; nay, the necessity of it to earthly happiness is so apparent, that the celebrated Impostor of the East, whose sensual laws indulged his followers in the unlimited gratification of their most vicious propensities, has yet commanded each of them, however distinguished by station or abilities, to be educated in the exercise of some manual employment. The Christian profession is itself an active calling; and, if it require not all *to labour, working with their hands*, yet it implicitly demands, that we *shall not be weary of well-doing, but willing to distribute, and ready to communicate* to the distressed of all around us.

III. In the third place, though it is generally adviseable to have one great object of pursuit, lest the mind should occasionally sink into languor and inactivity through the want of constant employment; yet there is no greater mistake than that of fixing
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our affections on a single terrestrial object, and supposing our happiness to depend on that alone. So bountiful has our CREATOR been, so many pleasurable objects and employments has he provided, that, if men will not suffer themselves to be misled by that great mistress of mistake, Fancy, or Opinion; * if they will not determine to imagine themselves miserable, unless possessed of some toy, or trifle, which they please to term a blessing; they may find resources of pleasure in almost every state. Our happiness (as far as it is merely temporal) is a fabric composed of diversified materials, of a number of parts apparently trifling and minute. Great objects serve commonly to cheat and delude the hopes and expectations of those who ardently pursue them; but their inefficacy to produce real comfort is almost proverbial. It is the part of true philosophy, as well as of religion, to divert us from these vain at-

* See the Thoughts of M. Paschal.

tachments,

tachments, which, by engaging every faculty of the soul, necessarily force us into excess, into vice, and into ruin. It is this violent adherence to one favourite passion or pursuit which has deluged the earth with blood; it is this, which has not only destroyed the peace of individuals, but of families and of societies. When disappointed in any fond pursuit, look around you with a philosophic eye, and consider how many sources of amusement and satisfaction lie elsewhere open to you. Determine to use them; force yourself from the wretched captivity, to which your imagination has reduced you, and try another scheme of enjoyment. Be assured that habit will be equally powerful in one case as in another: for, most probably, the very object you lament was not less the child of habit than of fancy. Nay, I have scarcely a doubt that you may still find pleasure, in those things which are yet in your power, even superior to that which you think you have lost.

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IV. Lastly. To avoid the risk of disappointment, in your intercourse with mankind take care not to expect too much. He, who hopes to find all things perfect in a world, which must of necessity contain a mixture of evil, moral as well as physical, will, of course, find himself in a state of continual disappointment. "What," says an ancient moralist, "is there new or extraordinary, if ignorant or abandoned persons act conformably to their nature or habits? You may repent your own credulity, but Providence is not in an error because a miracle was not wrought in your favour." You complain that virtue and merit are disregarded. — In the first place, beware that you do not overrate your own merits: for, though these complaints are commonly made in general terms, yet they usually center in self. But, supposing your allegation well founded; — you are virtuous. — It is well; — it is your duty, your interest. It would certainly be better for society if such claims were more generally

generally attended to. But, as it is, you ought to be informed, that temporal gain is not the object of virtue. If you take proper methods, I mean industry and prudence, you will probably succeed in that more sordid pursuit; and, before you rashly conclude that you have missed of your desired end, consider, with some degree of candour, whether you have employed the proper means.

That an equal vein of happiness or misery runs through the various conditions of human life, I am far from asserting; and, that there are some real evils attendant on this transitory state, I am ready to acknowledge: the principal of which, indeed almost the only evils that can be said utterly to exclude enjoyment, are, the total deprivation of health, and extreme poverty. This, however, will not suffice to invalidate the doctrine of my text; for, it is enough to establish the position, if I have proved, in the general, that the most powerful causes of uneasiness are our own folly, per-

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verseness,

verseness, and indiscretion. You have seen, that the great mistake, in which mankind have been involved in their pursuit of happiness, is that of seeking for it in the gratifications of sense rather than of intellect, in following after earthly in preference to spiritual pleasures. If we inquire with any degree of accuracy, we shall find, that those, who have acted on the former plan, have seldom failed to be disappointed ; and, consequently, that they constitute the majority of those who arraign the dispensations of Providence, while the *voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous*. Hence we shall probably be enabled to form some reasonable conjectures concerning the true end and perfection of man, and his proper business on the theatre of life. And this, if the general tenour of this discourse be true, must consist in the cultivation and improvement of the spiritual part of his nature, in the refinement of his sentiments, in the enlargement of his ideas, in converting and forming all the loose and scattered

scattered principles and dispositions of virtue into settled habits of the soul: in one word, in gradually fitting and preparing himself for the blessed society of *saints and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect*, and for those sublimer offices and functions, which he will be called upon to perform in *that heavenly city which is builded of God, in the presence of his Creator, his Redeemer, and Sanctifier; when the fashion of this world as a vesture shall be changed; when there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor pain, because the former things are passed away.*

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of God in the presence of his Father, his
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this world as a righteous shall be changed, when
there shall be no more death, but peace and
joy, because the former things are passed
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THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME

SERMON V:

THE ORIGIN AND USE OF PRAYER.*

JOB XXI. 15.

What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?

FROM the remotest periods of antiquity, we find mankind eagerly aspiring after the knowledge of their CREATOR, and anxiously endeavouring to pay him such attention and worship as demonstrates both a consciousness of his existence and an apprehension of his power.

If it were necessary to draw the line between the thinking and the instinctive parts of creation, this perhaps would be the surest mark by which to define the limits. Other ranks of being, confined by the physical necessity of their less perfect natures,

* Preached at Oakingham, September 19, 1784.

can only express the glory of their CREATOR in the beauty and propriety of their external form, and in the wonderful disposition of Providence, which causes them, without the smallest deviation, and as it were involuntarily, to conform to their respective ends. In the most sagacious of the animal creation we can discern nothing like a consciousness of its original: and it may be truly said, that they exist in the world without the smallest reflexion whence they came or whither they are going; while man, in the most savage and unenlightened state, has never failed to adopt something like a code of religious belief. Wild and fantastical as his ideas may be, there is still an exalted power of mind, which prompts to an inquiry into the nature and attributes of the most perfect of beings, and a generous confidence, which would cultivate a more intimate communication with him.

When a practice is general, there is more than a presumption that it is founded in nature.

nature. Men, however, at different periods, have appeared, who, through that most dangerous passion, the affectation of singularity, have resolutely determined to dispute the propriety of whatever is common: men, who would fancy themselves above the vulgar only because they choose to differ from them; who would arrive at eminence, not by the paths of patient industry and useful science, but by the devious track of conjecture and fancy.

It may lessen, in some degree, the consequence of the self-created philosophers of the present day to be informed, that their discoveries and objections are neither new nor extraordinary. There were men, even in the days of Job, who could say to the Omnipotent Deity: *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?* and into this simple question may all the objections of infidels against the expediency of religious worship be resolved.

What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? The fabric of the universe, with the vast variety of creatures which it contains, sufficiently inform us, that some first cause must have called them forth into existence; and the order, beauty, design, and artificial arrangement, of the several parts of creation speak this cause to have been intelligent. The power of the CREATOR is no less evident than his wisdom; and his benevolence and mercy are among the most apparent and most splendid of his attributes. — This is the Almighty. Now, a Being such as this, all-powerful and all-wise, must of necessity excite the admiration of a reflecting creature. A Being, ever merciful and beneficent, cannot fail to attract his gratitude; and a Being, on whom our existence, and that of universal nature, depends, cannot possibly be thought upon without some degree of reverence and awe. The complex of these sensations is worship, which, whether we will or not, we must pay to him, if we but suffer ourselves

selves to reflect upon him. It is perfectly agreeable to the law of our nature to appropriate some part of our time to this reflexion; and it is equally natural to demonstrate, by some external signs, those emotions which it spontaneously excites in our hearts.

In trouble or uneasiness, it is impossible to know that such a Being exists, and not to breathe a wish that he would stretch forth his almighty arm to help and comfort us. The heart must be devoid of every finer feeling of humanity, that can taste the bounties of his hand and not be warmed with gratitude and with love. Shall we, therefore, give utterance to our affections, or shall we stifle every rising emotion of goodness? Which is most congenial to the human feelings? which is most likely to promote habits of sympathy and social virtue?

With respect to the second object of inquiry, *What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?* we have no authority to think that the decrees of INFINITY will be altered by

by the intreaties of a mortal : *The LORD is not a man, that he should repent.* But it is an old and a common maxim, that the favour which is not worth asking is not worth conferring. If the assistance of the Deity be desirable, why should we not implore it with a becoming humility ? Such a conduct will, at least, demonstrate us not utterly unworthy the attention of the Almighty ; it will evince, that we put our trust and place our dependance on him ; it will evince, that we do not *forget* GOD ; and, if the particular blessing which we supplicate be on good reasons denied us, he will not be unmindful of us in his proper season.

But, a more evident advantage of prayer is the lesson of instruction it affords ourselves. I confess I should be much inclined to doubt that man's practice, whose faith is imperfect or unstable ; and his faith is questionable at least, who neglects the duty of prayer. Prayer serves to keep alive in our minds a proper sense of the existence
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of a GOD, and of his divine attributes. It warms the heart with his praises, and animates the affections with the enthusiasm of virtue. It is of the utmost importance to a religious life, frequently to meditate on our past conduct, and to inspect the faithful record of our conscience; and this we are obliged to do, if we confess our sins before GOD. The very hope of obtaining our petitions will naturally engage us to render ourselves agreeable to the Dispenser of every good and perfect gift, by a strict conformity to his precepts, and by a pure and uniform practice of virtue. Besides this, there is scarcely a single prayer in our excellent Liturgy which is not replete with moral instruction.* The use and design of

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* One of the most common objections to a liturgy (though I think the fact may be very reasonably questioned) is, that a composition, to which the ears of the congregation are much accustomed, is not sufficiently interesting to keep alive the attention. This, however, is, I think, amply counterbalanced by another circumstance, which is, that these prayers are generally impressed upon the memory of the people; and, as every prayer contains some precept or doctrine,

a Liturgy has been canvassed with much ardour, and with no less acrimony, by some zealous disputants of the last century. But those, who plead against forms of prayer, do not seem to recollect, that there is but one set of ideas, and that very limited, which may be addressed to the Deity on general subjects and in a public assembly: and, to ring changes upon words only is of no advantage, and can be little gratification to a rational person. It seems proper, also, that a congregation should have some previous information of what nature the prayers are, in which they are expected to join. Every minister of the Gospel is not of equal capacity, nor are all of dispositions equally amiable and sedate. It must be, to say the least, a disagreeable thing to hear petitions offered up to the Deity in our names, and in which we are supposed to unite, which shock our understandings. trine, moral or religious, their understandings are, by these means, furnished with a variety of useful ideas, which cannot fail to recur on different occasions in life.

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by their absurdity or unseasonableness. Least proper of all must be extempore prayer. When we presume to address the great Author of Nature, the *all-wise* GOD, every syllable should be duly weighed, and the greatest caution ought certainly to be observed. It is a respect we owe to GOD, and it may prevent some great indecorums, if not appearances of actual impiety.

Public worship is a decent, social, act of duty; nor can the whole compass of nature afford, in my opinion, a sight more interesting, and even sublime, than a devout congregation uniting in the praises of their infinite CREATOR. As for private devotion, those, who have tried its efficacy in affliction, solitude, or sickness, can best speak for the comforts which it has always afforded. There is a set of men, who will scarcely understand this language; but I believe the sincere and devout Christian would not resign his pleasures for all that ambition or sensuality could bestow.

Before

Before I conclude, I shall beg leave to point out one or two of the abuses of prayer: for, the best of institutions have ever been abused. The first is, when men substitute the mere EXTERNALS of worship for that sincere and spiritual service which is required of us. *This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* This is literally a mockery of our MAKER, and, believe me, is much better let alone. True devotion is of the heart; every nerve must feel, the affections must be excited, the mind must be purified of every earthly taint. The Pharisees were studious to *clean the outside of the cup and platter*; they made long prayers; they prayed frequently, fervently to appearance, and *let their light shine before men*:—But, for all these things, we are assured by CHRIST himself, *they shall only receive the greater damnation.* And you, my brethren, who think yourselves religious, beware of spiritual pride. The Pharisee thanked his GOD that he was not as other men are.—But the Publican, who dared
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scarcely to lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast, and cried, God be merciful to me, a sinner! went to his house justified rather than the other. Believe me, one single grain of Christian charity, one single devout ejaculation, accompanied with any act of sympathy and benevolence, is worth a whole life spent in cold (I could almost call it hypocritical) prayer. Not that I would be understood to discourage your devotion; I would only caution you against mistaking its true end, which is to engage the heart more warmly in the service of its CREATOR, and to prepare it for fulfilling more effectually the active duties of Christianity.

The other error, against which I esteem it my duty to admonish you, derives its origin from that great mistress of craft and delusion, the Church of Rome. To increase the treasures of her priests, she strenuously endeavoured to promote the opinion, that she had established a kind of traffic with GOD, who might be laid under obligation; and that the righteousness of one man could

could atone for the sin of another. Unhappy criminals relied on the absolute power of the church to forgive sins, and the confident reprobate went forward in his career of depravity without compunction or remorse. A prayer on his death-bed, the sacrament, or some ceremony of even less importance, was supposed effectually to cleanse his polluted soul; or a mass, celebrated after his decease, miraculously unbarred the gates of heaven. I have remarked it even in this country, and with no less regret than astonishment, that an opinion is prevalent, and especially among the uninformed part of mankind, that the prayers of a minister, or the receiving of the sacrament, are effectual means of reconciliation to GOD, even upon a death-bed, however the account may stand between the sinner and his conscience. I intreat you, my brethren, with as much affection as sincerity, be misled by no such artifices of your spiritual enemy. They are delusions, and of the most fatal kind:

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to rely upon them is trifling with your dearest interest, your eternal salvation. Let the man, who suspects his dissolution to be at hand, instead of sending for the priest, and expecting from his prayers absolution and forgiveness, — let him send for every person whom he has injured in thought, word, and deed; let him, if he would obtain pardon and reconciliation, if he would render himself really acceptable with God, make the most perfect restitution in his power; let him repair every wrong, and heal the heart which he has wounded with the envenomed shafts of falsehood, injustice, cruelty, and ingratitude. This is indeed a duty which ought not to be deferred to the last stage of existence, but which ought to take place as soon as you are convinced of its necessity. There is but little chance that at the close of life you will have an opportunity; and, at all events, a death-bed repentance is generally very imperfect: without presuming to limit the mercy of the Almighty, to say the most of it, its ef-

fects are doubtful ; and who would stake his eternal happiness on a doubtful issue ? But, above all things, beware of the deceitful, the destructive hope, that a fruitless prayer, or an empty ceremony, will blot out your transgressions and insure your salvation.

On the whole, the duty of prayer is a natural, a salutary, a delightful duty ; but, unless it be accompanied with a good life, it is blossom without fruit. It is not religion ; for, religion is a consistent whole, formed out of a variety of correspondent duties, which promote and conspire with each other ; and the want of any of them destroys the beauty and utility of the whole machine. The true worshippers must *worship GOD in spirit and in truth* ; and I am sure, if you address him with sincerity, you will not hesitate to observe his commandments.

S E R M O N

SERMON VI.

THE ESSENTIAL DUTIES OF MORALITY.*

MICAH VI. 8.

*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;
and what doth the Lord require of thee, but
to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk
humbly with thy God?*

THERE is great reason to believe, that the passage, from which I have selected my text, made a part of that famous reply of the Prophet Balaam to Balak, the King of Moab, the occasion of which is related at large in another part of Scripture. It may therefore be considered as one of the most ancient specimens of didactic or ethical composition extant; and affords a proof, not less satisfactory than curious, of the superior knowledge, re-

* Preached, at St. Peter's, Liverpool, September, 1780.

finement, and civilization, which distinguished the worshippers of the true GOD, in opposition to the barbarity and ignorance, which pervaded the idolatrous nations. In the passage under our consideration, and in that immediately preceding, the prophet seems to assume merely the character of an historian: *Remember, says he, what Balak, King of Moab, consulted, and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him, from Skittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord, (or that righteousness which is acceptable to the Lord.)* He then proceeds to state with how much solicitude and anxiety the superstitious monarch inquires concerning the means of obtaining the favour of GOD: *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high GOD? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* The prophet answers,

answers, in the short and sententious language of the times, as if he had said : —
“ Thou art mistaken, O man, in thy conception of the divine nature and attributes.—Know, that these things, which thou so liberally offereſt, are not thine own; they are the gifts of Providence, the ſplendid appendages of thy ſuperior ſtation in life. The Lord, JEHOVAH, requires a more worthy ſacrifice, and one which will more effectually demonſtrate the ſincerity of thy devotion.” —
He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD ?

In theſe words is contained a beautiful compendium of the moral duties of life, and they might ſerve as a plan or ground-work of a complete ſyſtem of ethics; ſuch a ſyſtem will hardly be expected within the limits of a ſhort diſcourſe : ſome of the leaſt trite however, though perhaps not leaſt uſeful, obſervations on theſe ſubjects

may be reduced within a narrower compass; and it was with this design that I selected for your consideration the words which I have just recited.

To do justly is the first virtue specified by the inspired author; and indeed it has been not improperly accounted the basis of all other virtues. It is not only necessary to conciliate confidence and trust in every private connexion, but is so essential to the existence of society, that one of the most correct moralists of antiquity has well observed, that not even a company of banditti or a band of pirates could subsist without some rule of justice established among themselves.

The nature of justice may, at first sight, appear too evident to require explanation; and perhaps it would be so, if the justice essential to a Christian life consisted merely in walking within the verge of the law, or even according to the common principles of equity and fair-dealing. But the justice of a Christian must go beyond this.

this. Every moral virtue, in the possession of the disciple of JESUS, alters its nature, and becomes different from what it would have been in the possession of any other man. I shall not, therefore, detain you with enumerating those actions, that are marked as breaches of justice by the laws of every civilized community. I shall only make a single observation on this topic, which, as it may be useful, cannot, I think, be considered as altogether unseasonable. Men are, in general, prompted by two motives to the commission of crimes. The first is the opinion, that the action, they are about to commit, may prove such as not to lead them beyond the boundaries of law; and consequently that it may be consistent with their own safety, though not with the principles of equity. Or, secondly, though the crime be punishable by law, they are misled by the expectation of escaping the sword of justice by extraordinary cunning and vigilance. These are both found, however, to be mistaken principles. Be

assured, that to depart from the strictness of honesty and equity is always unsafe. A man sets out with an intention of injuring his neighbour, but with a full resolution to commit nothing for which he may become amenable to law: but a sanguine temper, flushed with success; or, on the other hand, unexpected impediments, which he thinks a small infringement on the laws of his country may remove, or some similar motive, may allure him forward to inevitable ruin. With respect to the other motive, the ill success of almost every man, who has been hardy enough to attempt a violation of the laws of civil society, is a sufficient refutation: they, too, flattered themselves with the hope of escaping by superior cunning. The truth is, there are so many trivial circumstances, on which the secrecy of every action depends; and human sagacity is so imperfect, so unable to provide against every little contingency, that it always happens some loop-hole is left

left open, some little clue is constantly found, which leads to detection.

I intimated that the nature of justice, though commonly supposed to be one of the plainest principles in morals, is in general but imperfectly understood; and I fear it is a melancholy fact, that not individuals only, but whole nations, and those the most enlightened which the present (or perhaps any) stage of society can exhibit, will be found, on an accurate inspection, miserably ignorant of the principles of this virtue. A virtue, which indeed appears to dwell more upon our lips than in our hearts; and serves to grace our conversation, but is not seen in our practice.

Not to speak of that rapine which has dishonoured the name of Britain in the East, — and which, because it has involved the fate of a few of those who are stiled the rulers of the earth, has been more a topic of declamation than some stronger instances of oppression, that only affect inferior multitudes, — if we turn our eyes to that scene of
unparalleled

unparalleled cruelty and injustice which universally disgraces our possessions in the West, surely we shall find this melancholy reflexion too fatally verified. When we consider the unhappy and unmerited fate of thousands, forced by violence from that home, which, however rude and inelegant, has always charms to interest the passions of men; the tender wife inhumanly torn from the embraces of her husband; the parent deprived of his child; every delicate connection, every tender tie, that constitutes the felicity of human life, rudely burst asunder: * When we consider these unhappy fugitives, for ever removed from that country where all their happiness was centered, for ever removed from the

* "During their transportation from Africa, three or four hundred are usually confined in the hold of a ship, where a pestilential air, bad provisions, the regret of being forced from their kindred and friends, and, not seldom, diseases, which they acquire from our people, make dreadful havock." See *Essays historical and moral*, p. 304. and MR. RAMSAY'S Tracts on Slavery.

assistance of those whose affection and cares might serve to lighten the burthen of calamity; when we regard them, exposed to hunger,* to fatigue, † to the utmost inclemency of seasons, perishing under the lash, ‡ or during the infliction of tortures, at the bare idea of which every feeling of humanity revolts; — what, but ignorance

* “ The allowance of food, on the plantation, is seldom more than a pint of beans or Indian corn *per diem*: in some plantations, indeed, they are allotted a spot of ground for their subsistence, which they must cultivate at those hours that ought to be appropriated to sleep.” *Ib.* 308.

† “ The hours of labour are *sixteen*, and at the very least *fourteen*, out of the *twenty-four*; and the exertions which are required are frequently more than their natural strength or constitution will bear.” *Ib.*

‡ “ During the greater part of their labour, they are exposed to the intolerable rays of an equinoctial sun. The pregnant wretch, who droops with weakness and fatigue, and the miserable convalescent, untimely summoned from the bed of sickness, are equally subjected to the inclemency of the elements and the wanton cruelty of their *drivers*.” *Ib.* N. B. These assertions are proved, in the above Essay, (which has never been controverted,) by particular facts.

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of the virtue of justice, shall we say, can induce a great and generous nation to behold these enormities with a callous indifference? What, but a total ignorance of the very principles of justice, can influence a legislature, celebrated for its attention to the rights of mankind, to authorise by its sanction a plan of cruelty, which even the tyrants of old would have contemplated with amazement;* to mould oppression in-

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* The following is literally extracted from a common news-paper.

“ *New-York, July 12, 1785.* We learn, from Providence, that a negro, belonging to Mr. Barron, having eloped, such a pursuit was made after him, that he thought proper to return. It is the practice of runaway slaves, in Providence, to besmear themselves with grease, so that it is almost impossible for their pursuers to hold them. Thus besmeared, and armed with a large knife, Mr. Barron received information of the slave being in negro-quarters. As it was determined that he should be punished, his master, Mr. Car, and Mr. M’Kinnon, went into the quarters to secure him. Two of the company went into the quarters, whilst Mr. Car guarded the door. The fellow, being thus at bay, made a desperate effort to get away; but, being seized by Mr. Car, he

“ drew

to a system ; to deny to mortals formed like themselves the same equal protection ;* to stamp murder with impunity, and even to

" drew a concealed knife, and stabbed the unhappy gentleman to the heart, so that he instantly died. Mr. McKinnon pursued him, and would have secured him but for the greasy condition of his skin. In struggling with him, he received several gashes, some of them so well directed, that, if the knife had not been previously blunted in stabbing the other gentleman, he must inevitably have fallen. Assistance providentially coming up, the fellow was secured, and brought to a summary trial, when he received sentence to suffer death. He was immediately led to execution, and had his hand struck off, which he bore with an indignant firmness ; but, his mutilated bleeding stump being immersed in boiling pitch, he appeared to feel the torments of the damned. He was now thrown into the hot pitch, and then hanged."

" Gibbeting alive is the common punishment. I knew a gentleman, who had seen, in Antigua, some of these wretches exist on the gibbet to the ninth day, with a loaf of bread hung at the end of the gibbet to enhance the torture." *Essays historical and moral*, p. 310.

* " If a negro kill a white man, even through passion or mischance, the inevitable punishment is death. If a white man murder a negro, he is only mulcted with a slight pecuniary penalty, which yet is seldom, if ever, exacted." *Essays historical and moral*, p. 311. The negro is not tried by his peers, but by his masters. Indeed, three

to hold forth encouragements and temptations to that first of crimes ? *

Let the slave-holder or the slave-merchant peruse with attention the sacred dictates of Almighty Justice. Let him read, that whoever, in any form or manner, directly or indirectly, shall cause the *death* or misery of a fellow-creature, will, at the last great day, be called to the severest account. Let him read the awful sentence pronounced by the mouth of ALMIGHTY GOD : *Surely your blood of your lives will I require ; at the hand of even every beast will I require it, and at the hand of every man's brother will I require*

three justices of the peace may, at any time, condemn a negro to the most cruel death.

* " Authors on this subject have remarked the custom of advertising a higher reward for the head of a fugitive negro than for taking him alive." *Ib.*

" As government always pays the full price for any negro who suffers death upon conviction of felony, when an unprincipled planter has an old negro who is past his labour, the planter takes care to starve him till he is reduced by hunger to a state of desperation ; some provision is then laid in his way, in order to tempt him to steal, &c." *Ib.*

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the life of man. Let him ponder this, and let him (if he be a man possessed of any sense of religion) reflect on the innocent multitudes, whom he has been the means of bringing to an untimely and miserable end; * let him then, IF IT BE POSSIBLE, silence the reproaches of his conscience, and rest tranquil and satisfied under the apprehension of that justice, which will render to every man (exactly) according to his works.

These are among the more glaring breaches of justice; but there are others, less notorious, which yet, if we will examine with the attention and accuracy that become a believer in the truths of the Gospel, we shall find totally inconsistent with the practice of a Christian. The compilation would indeed be voluminous which

* "I am confident I am *below* the truth, when I say that not less than *one-fifth* of these victims of avarice are murdered in their passage; and, an infallible proof of the cruelty of the trade is, the vast supplies annually required to supply the consumption, which, I think, Raynal estimates at about a *seventh*." *Id.*

should

should exhibit a complete catalogue of these. Let it suffice to say, that not only every species of fraud or deceit, but whatever, in writing or conversation, in word as well as action, may detract from the peace and happiness of your neighbour, is a direct offence against this cardinal virtue. Not only to invent a slander is criminal in this respect, but to propagate it. Men little imagine, that they are exposing themselves to the displeasure of the Almighty by receiving and promulgating every idle report or anecdote. But remember, that, to mention any thing to the disadvantage of another, without at the same time discovering your author, without explaining the grounds and reasons of your opinion, is pledging yourself for the authenticity of the report; and, you may depend upon it, you are scarcely less culpable than the original author, and will have to answer for it where *every idle word is to be accounted for.*

Another circumstance permit me, while I am upon this subject, to caution you against,

gainst, since it is one of the most common and most dangerous of temptations: I mean, the abuse of power. Beware of on any occasion oppressing those beneath you; for this is a complex crime, in which cruelty is mingled with injustice. Act better towards that useful body, the labouring poor, than even strict justice would require. Pay them not only honestly, but generously; not only faithfully, but punctually; and let not the hand, which calls itself the votary of justice, hold back, even for an hour, the scanty pittance of the labourer. To defer the payment can be little gain to you, but may be infinite loss and inconvenience to him: *Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant, that is poor and needy; and at his day thou shalt give him his hire; his wages shall not abide with thee all night unto the morning; for, he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.*

It is remarkable, that, among the numerous moral precepts of the Gospel,

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there are so few directly explanatory of the nature of injustice, while it forms a principal topic in other systems of ethics. The truth is, our LORD could imagine no such defect in any person who assumed the character of his disciple. The man, who *does not love the world*; the man, who *has crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts*; the man, who *hates and abhors covetousness*; who *loves the LORD his GOD with all his mind, and with all his strength, and his neighbour as himself*; cannot be a villain. Thus, the whole of the Gospel is a provision against the possibility of injustice, even in thought; *and every one that nameth the name of CHRIST must depart from all iniquity.*

To repair those breaches of social happiness, which the injustice of some may have occasioned; to *heal the broken-hearted*; to dry the tears of the mourner; to unite mankind by the gentlest bonds, those of gratitude and affection, the Deity has infused into the human soul an emanation from his own eternal essence: this most noble principle he
has

has called MERCY: and *what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy.* But neither is the nature of this precept well understood, nor is it limited in its operation. Mercy (as well as every other Christian virtue) must be formed into a habit of the soul, and must extend to every part of our demeanour. We can scarcely form a fair estimate of the virtue of any man from that part of his conduct which is restrained and regulated by law and custom; we can scarcely judge of the real sympathy and compassion of the heart from a few kind offices to his fellow-men; nor can I account that person merciful, who is not so *in spirit and in truth*. If, therefore, we try men by their conduct to the brute-creation, how miserably deficient will they be found in this attribute of supreme goodness! For what petty interests and passions are the noblest of creatures tortured and abused! *

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* “ No small part of mankind derive their chief amusements (says a late writer) from the deaths and sufferings of inferior animals; a much greater consider them only

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It appears to have been a part of that curse, which the disobedience of the first man brought upon his posterity, that we were compelled to stain our hands in blood, and to subsist on the destruction of other animals. But surely, if the necessities of our nature oblige us to deprive an innocent being of life, it ought to be done in the easiest and

“ as engines of wood or iron, useful in their several occu-
“ pations. If there are some few, who, formed in a softer
“ mould, view with pity the sufferings of those defenceless
“ creatures, there is scarce one who entertains the least idea
“ that justice or gratitude can be due to their merits or ser-
“ vices. The friendly dog is hanged without remorse, if,
“ by barking in defence of his master’s property, he hap-
“ pens unknowingly to disturb his rest. The generous
“ horse, who has carried his ungrateful master for many
“ years with ease and safety, worn out with age and infir-
“ mities contracted in his service, is by him condemned to
“ end his miserable days in a dust-cart; where, the more he
“ exerts his little remains of strength and spirit, the more
“ he is whipped, to save his driver the trouble of whipping
“ some other less obedient to the lash. Sometimes, having
“ been taught the practice of many unnatural and useless
“ feats in a riding-house, he is at last consigned to the do-
“ minion of a hackney-coachman, by whom he is every
“ day inhumanly corrected for performing those tricks,
“ which he has learned under so long and severe a disci-
“ pline.”

speediest

speediest manner: and such was the custom among the peculiar people of GOD. What shall we say to that luxury, which, for a momentary gratification of appetite, condemns a creature, endued with feeling, and perhaps with mind, to languish in torments, and to expire by a protracted and cruel death? * Such luxury I cannot help esteeming as the *sop of Judas*, and have little doubt that *a curse* enters in along with it.

The GOD, whose bounty feeds us, and whose providence sustains us, the GOD, whose attributes we are bound to imitate, inculcates mercy, both by his precepts and example. He extends his favour to the whole creation: *the young lions do seek their meat from God; and not a sparrow falleth to*

* This luxury is however frequently merely fanciful; for, the flesh is commonly rendered more unwholesome and ill-flavoured by the means used to make it whiter and more pleasing to the eye. The roasting or boiling of animals alive cannot possibly heighten the flavour. Brawn and other species of food, which are procured by the torture of the animal, are in general extremely unwholesome.

*the ground without our heavenly Father. He implicitly commanded his chosen people, not to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn: and a merciful man, says an author who wrote by the divine inspiration, is merciful to his beast. I confess, therefore, that I never am witness to any instance of wanton barbarity to inferior animals, but I look upon the person who exercises it as a fallen angel, acting under the immediate direction of Satan, and with all the rancour and malignancy of that evil spirit predominant in his breast.**

Let us not suppose that there are no ill consequences, with respect to our social and moral sentiments, attendant on this mode of conduct. There is no setting bounds to the malevolent passions; there is no saying to them: *hitherto shalt thou come, and no further.* The man, who cannot feel for a poor, subject,

* For a multitude of facts illustrative of this subject, I will beg leave to refer the reader to a very ingenious author already quoted. — *Disquisitions*, attributed to S. JENYNS, Esq.

dumb,

dumb, inoffensive animal, will hardly act with justice or compassion on any occasion; and I will venture to advise, with respect to such an one,—“ Let no such man be trusted.” Some infatuated parents I have known look upon cruelty to other animals as a mark of spirit; but I confess I should not wonder (such is the force of habit) if that parent’s heart were to ache under the malignancy, which he took so little pains to restrain, or if children so educated were *to bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.*

It is obvious, that, as the last precept seemed to include the former, (for, the merciful man can scarcely be guilty of injustice,) so both of them appear to be indirectly intimated in the words, *walk humbly with thy God*; since to walk humbly with God is to be obedient to his precepts. In a more limited sense, this part of the text will apply to the performance of such religious duties as he has enjoined, and to the exclusion of all profane or irreverend actions or

expressions. On this subject we shall, if possible, find less room to compliment the present generation than on the two former topics. A superficial and trifling taste has emancipated us no less completely from the influence of humility than from that of religion. So small a stock of erudition is indeed required to equip a fashionable man and a fashionable writer, that it is nothing extraordinary if our manners and our sentiments should be found different from those of other times. With our ancestors the alliance between learning and piety was held sacred and inviolable; and even at present the truth of the principle, which estimates the knowledge and genius of any character by his profligacy and irreligion, may, I apprehend, admit of some dispute. The influence of religion upon morals has been frequently investigated, and with little honour to the sceptical side of the question: so strict, indeed, does the connexion appear between the three precepts, which are enjoined by the prophet, that I am inclined
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to doubt, whether any man, who does not *walk humbly with his God*, can either *do justly* or *love mercy* as he ought. There is a wide difference between the sudden impulse of passion and caprice, and that steady love of virtue, which a firm belief in the Gospel must always inspire. Habits of order and decency, at least, are inseparably connected with the restraints and renunciations of a religious life ; and here also I fear we shall lose by the comparison, when the sober manners of our ancestors are opposed to the irregularity, the dissipation, the profligacy and suicide of the present times. Nay, I will go further ; and I will assert, from my acquaintance with individuals, that I have seldom known a respectable, or even a really prosperous man, who was not exact and regular in the performance of those duties, which he immediately owes to his CREATOR. If, therefore, you would proceed in an honourable and orderly course of virtue ; if you would be consistent ; if you would be respectable, attend to the admonition,

nition, — *Walk humbly with thy GOD.* Study to acquire such notions of the Deity and his attributes as are conformable to truth and reason. View him as the fountain of *justice, mercy, wisdom*, of all virtue and all power. Endeavour even to emulate that example of perfection which he has set before you; those attributes of infinity, which excite the highest admiration the human mind is capable of feeling, are wholly employed and exerted in doing good. The felicity of every being, human and divine, is in exact proportion to their goodness. *To do justly and to love mercy* are the only solid foundations of happiness, even in this life, private as well as social; in fulfilling these, as well as every other maxim of divine truth, you are only doing a favour to yourself; and yet, O man! this is all that is required of thee, this is the only condition for the attainment of eternal felicity: *to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N VII.

ON HUMILITY.*

I PET. V. 5.

Be clothed with humility.

THOUGH a holy and religious life be rather an assemblage and union of all the moral and evangelical virtues, than a fabric produced from any simple material; yet there are some qualities or habits of the soul, which may be justly accounted the bases or fundamentals, by which the structure is chiefly supported; and of this kind is the virtue of humility. It is essential to us as men, because an humble demeanour only is consistent with truth and nature, and all pride and arrogance is falsehood and deception. It is essential to us as Christians, because without it we shall be utterly

* Preached at the Asylum, June the 12th, 1785.

incapacitated

incapacitated for the exercise of those duties and condescensions, which the spirit of our religion requires of us.

Such appears to have been the sentiment of the apostle Peter, if we may judge by the strength and boldness of the metaphor which he employs on this occasion: for, he does not barely say, “adorn, or ornament, “yourselves with the graces of humility;” but, *be clothed* with it, let the whole of your external conduct assume the form and the colour of this virtue, let it be the garment in which you are attired, not only for ornament, but use. The metaphor is indeed evidently borrowed from the Jewish ceremonies, from the sanctity and virtue which the sacred vestments of the priests of Israel were supposed to contain, and to impart to the wearer; for, by the Levitical law, the ministers of the temple were strictly prohibited from performing any part of their duty, unless previously invested with these ensigns of their holy office. The apostle, therefore, having in the former

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mer part of this Epistle distinguished his Christian converts by the high appellation of a *holy* and a *royal priesthood*, a *chosen generation*, he now exhorts them, agreeably to the same figure, to be *clothed with humility*, as the peculiar vestment and attire of the Christian priesthood.

I do not recollect, that this virtue was held in equal estimation by the moralists or philosophers of Greece and Rome; nor did any of them, in the detached precepts which they have furnished in its commendation, build the arguments in its favour upon proper principles. They have told us, indeed, in general terms, that pride is not proper or expedient for man; but the oracles of divine truth, which direct our attention, beyond second causes, to the great source and fountain of all, assign the proper reason for this sentiment; they exhort us to *give God the glory*, because pride is really not becoming in any created being, and because there is nothing in creation that

that can reasonably administer to this passion.

Whatever eminence of parts, whatever splendour of situation we have attained, however distinguished by rank or precedence, we shall find no cause for self-complacency in these acquisitions, if we but seriously reflect that we did not make ourselves ; and that we are indebted for them, not to ourselves, but to another ; that they redound not to our own glory, but to that of another. He that called you out of nothing, he endued you with parts and understanding, he showered blessings into your lap, he caused you to be respected and to be esteemed. — His be the praise, his the glory ! — For, *who maketh thee to differ, or what hast thou which thou didst not receive ?*

To depreciate external and earthy possessions is not always the peevish effort of misanthropy, or the language of disappointment. It is viewing things as they are ; for, in reality, though they may redound to the honour of their infinite Creator,
they

they are nothing in themselves. “ How
“ subject to change and to corruption are
“ all sublunary things ! ” says one of the
most profound of the ancient moralists. —
“ With what facility do they alter their
“ nature ? They pass with ease into the
“ substance of each other, and in an in-
“ stant are resolved into the mean consti-
“ tuents of their being, dust and ashes.”
“ Human life itself,” says he in another
place, “ is but a point ; all human enjoy-
“ ment delusive and unsatisfactory. Fame
“ is an absurdity, often acquired without
“ merit, and generally conferred without
“ judgement or consideration. In short,
“ life is a warfare, a pilgrimage ; and
“ posthumous reputation is, with respect
“ to yourself, oblivion.” How little, and
how impotent a being is man ! An atom in
the great vortex of infinity ; a bubble
blown up for the moment, and burst with
the slightest shock ! View the Nimrods,
the Belshazzars, the Alexanders, and the
Cæsars, languishing under the pressure of
some

some tedious disease. View them stung with resentment, humbled by disappointment, defiled by intemperance, debased by superstition. Behold the conqueror of the world racked by a pebble, aghast with terror at the flight of a bird, or the incoherent prediction of a frantic prophetess, transported with rage and vexation, in an agony of wretchedness at the caprices of a harlot: behold him foolish, prodigal, cruel, and unjust: behold the envy of a gazing multitude the object of contempt and pity with his nearer connexions; and then tell me, if the world, or all that it can bestow, can elevate such a creature as thou art to any degree of pre-eminence to justify thy vanity or thy presumption?

“If riches confer dignity,” says the philosopher, “the mine that yielded them “is more an object of veneration than “thou art.” Thou art flattered, thou art carested; but, if for thy riches thou art flattered, this is no ground of pride to thee; thy gold is worshipped, not thyself; and,
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to make the experiment, transfer that to another, and behold all this false veneration go along with it.

If of a noble or an ancient family, what is that to thee? It is no merit of thine, it is purely the effect of chance. If, by some accident, thy birth had been concealed, thou wouldest not have been in any respect the better for it; and, bred upon a mountain, the commonest peasant would have been on an equality with thee. If we could descend to the useless and impertinent vanity of tracing pedigrees for but a few ages back, (as is justly observed by a popular writer,) we should scarcely find a beggar, who might not count a king in his family; or a king, who would not appear the lineal offspring of a beggar.*

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* Perhaps there is a still stronger argument. Were titles and dignities usually the rewards of virtue and merit, it would be natural for the human mind to recur with some degree of pride to the great actions of an ancestor; but, if we examine accurately, who were the founders of most noble families, we shall find them such as (if there be any thing

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“ The endowments of understanding,
“ however, the embellishments of learn-
“ ing, the graces of eloquence, and the
“ splendour of genius, are certainly our
“ own; and are distinctions which elevate
“ us towards the rank of superior and ce-
“ lestial intelligences, which render us use-
“ ful to our fellow-creatures, and dear in
“ the sight of God.” Yet remember, that
not in the possession, but in the use of these
endowments, consists the merit. For, no
created being, we are informed, possessed
these accomplishments in higher perfection,
than that accursed spirit, who fell from
everlasting bliss into everlasting torments;
and who is not only eternally miserable
himself, but is the base instrument of in-
flicting misery on others.

If genius, eloquence, and erudition,
exempted their possessors from the weak-

at all in birth or ancestry) ought rather to call a blush into
the cheeks of their descendants. They have been either
the minions of courts, the peculators of nations, or the ser-
vile ministers of their monarch's vices.

nesses

nesses and errors of men, they might indeed afford some little plea for self-exaltation. But melancholy is the view with which an intimate knowledge of human nature presents us. The greatest minds have been occasionally subject to weaknesses of understanding, violence of passion, and perversities of temper, which, in the cool moments of reflexion, must humble and debase them, even in their own opinions : and, as genius and learning serve to point and quicken all the human feelings, their remorse, their shame, the sense of their debasement, must be more severe than that of ordinary minds.

But, *the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God.* It has been the complaint of the most enlightened minds, that the sole effect of their philosophy was the sense of their own ignorance. So imperfect are the faculties of man, that, the further we advance in science, the more we discern their weakness and incapacity of comprehending the infinite objects which a survey of this universe presents ; not to speak of those higher spe-

culations which regard the intellectual world. In morals, to know ourselves is to know our own imbecillity, perverseness, the general depravity and unworthiness of our natures. Wit is little more than specious trifling. Eloquence, a mere science of words and sounds, calculated to fascinate the ear; or it is, at most, a play upon the passions and infirmities of others; and, instead of exciting lofty ideas of human nature, affords matter only for an humble opinion of ourselves and our fellow-creatures. As for the inferior arts, they are expedients to supply our natural defects and inconveniences, or they are calculated to fill up the interstices of time, to render the burthen of life more tolerable. They are, therefore, to the rational mind, incitements to humility, which in every view appears conformable to truth, to reason, and to the nature of man.

I observed, that humility is essential to the practice of all the Christian duties and virtues,

virtues, and to the fulfilling faithfully the precepts of our Redeemer.

The first virtue of our religion is to *love the Lord our God*. — But how love him? It is to love him alone; to *love him with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our strength*. Now, the affections of the proud man have a different object: for, whatever excuses may be made for pride, its root is selfishness; and the selfish man cannot be acceptable to GOD, nor can he fulfil his commandments as he ought, or upon proper motives. Besides this, GOD is the GOD of truth, nay, is truth itself. — Pride we have already proved to be altogether falsehood and deception, and therefore inconsistent with the love of truth and of GOD.

But, the manner, in which we are to *love* GOD, is to love him in his creatures, that is, *thy neighbour as thyself*: this is indeed the only testimony we are able to afford of our love to GOD, and our respect for his commandments; and this is altogether incon-

sistent with a proud and overbearing spirit. *Only by pride cometh contention.* Pride renders us sore and captious upon every trifling occasion. It generates disputes, where there would otherwise have been none. It makes us envious, suspicious, turbulent, and tyrannical. The virtues of meekness and humility are commonly connected in the language of the Scriptures, and in the nature of things it is impossible that without the latter the former can exist.

The great Christian duty of charity requires innumerable acts of kindness and condescension, which it is impossible for a haughty and ungoverned spirit to perform. The LORD JESUS, whose whole life was one continued act of humility, and the manner of whose appearance seems chiefly intended to recommend this virtue, was not above washing the feet of his disciples; nor did he except to performing the office even to the traitor Judas, who, he knew, was about to betray him.

As

As Christians, we are obliged not only to *forgive*, but to *love our enemies*; and I am sure no inconsiderable share of humility is requisite to this duty. Revenge is generally the effect of wounded pride, which if we could but learn to subdue, we should find tranquillity and forgiveness perfectly consistent with true dignity of soul.

Besides this, we are to receive with patience, and even with joy the visitations of the ALMIGHTY. We are to *glory in tribulation*.—St. Paul gloried in his *stripes*. Are you poor? The Son of GOD was born in a manger, and during the whole course of his earthly pilgrimage *had not where to lay his head*. Are you evil-spoken of? He was called a *glutton and a wine-bibber*, a *Samaritan*, and one *possessed of a devil*. Are you treated contumeliously? He was *buffeted, spit upon, scourged, and crucified* as a common malefactor.

It is a question whether even the cardinal virtue, justice, can subsist without a degree of humility; since I know nothing that

tempts us more frequently to violate the rights of mankind, than that evil disposition, which induces us to set ourselves above our fellow-mortals. An humble and obliging demeanour contributes more to the real happiness of those with whom we associate than any lucrative favours we could heap upon them; and, if we judge according to the divine injunction of *doing unto others as we would they should do unto us*, we shall be full as cautious of wounding the peace and happiness of those whom Providence has placed in an inferior station, by the wanton display of our superiority, as we should be of injuring their property. So valuable, indeed, does the wise man account the blessing of tranquillity, that he exclaims: *Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife.*

Pride also, as far as respects ourselves, is generally accompanied with a train of evils. Instead of causing us to be loved and revered by others, which should seem

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to be the natural intention of it, its certain effect is to make us hated, if not despised. It often induces habits of extravagance and prodigality, which end in beggary and ruin. It is, in fine, the vice only of inferior minds, who, wanting real dignity, grasp eagerly at every means of acquiring the shadow or appearance of consequence, and who, possessed of no qualities to render them estimable in the sight of others, endeavour to make up for the deficiency by seeming great in their own eyes; and, that they may not exist intirely destitute of admirers, like the infatuated youth in the fable, fall in love with themselves.

As far as humility may be affected by the operation of the divine grace and providence upon our souls, it is to be sought for by diligent, or rather constant prayer; as far as it is a human habit or virtue, it will admit of cultivation and improvement by human efforts. I shall therefore conclude with a few observations, which will probably assist you in the cultivation of this virtue,

tue, and which, I am of opinion, you will find as conducive to your happiness here, as they certainly will be to the attainment of that which we hope for hereafter.

I. Endeavour to lay the foundation of humility upon proper principles. Remember, that there is nothing in nature, and especially in human nature, that can justify the contrary disposition. Consider your transient, momentary, and uncertain existence; the misery and infirmity of your nature, bodily and mental; and what a little and insignificant being you are in the scale of infinity.

II. Look not altogether on the outward and apparent splendour of things, and do not accustom yourself to suppose happiness and dignity necessarily connected with pomp, equipage, and the gaze of the vulgar.

III. Meditate often on your failings and defects; make frequent confession of your sins; and I will answer for it, that, if you are faithful in taking an account of them, you will find no great reason to be in love with

with yourself. "Remember," says the excellent Bishop Taylor, "that we usually
"disparage others upon slight grounds and
"light instances; and, if we can throw
"one sin, folly, or infirmity, into the ac-
"count of another man, we think him suf-
"ficiently lessened." Let us therefore be
just to ourselves, since we are severe to
others; and reflect that, whatever good
any one can think or say of us, we can tell
him of a hundred base, unworthy and
foolish actions, any one of which would
seem sufficient to destroy the reputation of
another.

IV. Let us estimate our own advantages
with the same strictness, with which we
estimate those of others. "When your
"neighbour is extolled by public fame,"
says the philosopher whom I quoted in the
former part of this discourse, "you are apt
"to assert, that the multitude is ignorant,
"injudicious, and insane: why, then,
"should you think them learned and judi-
"cious if they applaud you? or why
"should

“ should you aspire to be the object of their
“ adulation ?”

V. Avoid carefully the society of flatterers, nor be desirous of praise, even when you are conscious of deserving it; the mind is apt enough to amuse itself with offerings to its own vanity, nor does it stand in need of foreign aid in the great business of self-deception.

VI. and lastly. Accustom yourself, every evening of your life, to *self-examination*; and ask yourself ingenuously, and in the sight of God, “ Am I modest, meek, un-
“ ambitious, free, open, and of an obliging demeanour? Can I bear with patience to hear of my faults; and can I
“ love even those who wrongfully accuse me? Am I free from affectation? can I
“ contentedly pass undistinguished among my equals? and am I never tempted to
“ adopt any peculiarities in sentiment or manner, by way of appearing eminent
“ or singular? Do I find in my own breast
“ no signs of murmuring or repining? Do
“ I

" I not feel degraded by the duties of my
" secular employment, or by those which
" CHRIST has enjoined us to perform for
" each other? Do I not, at some times,
" really estimate myself above others? am
" I not inclined to fancy my inferiors in
" station my inferiors in the sight of GOD?
" Do I never treat them roughly, severely,
" tyrannically; nor wantonly draw a tear
" into the eye, that looks up to me for
" support?" ----- If you can answer these
questions to your own satisfaction; if such
be the temper and habit of your soul; you
are possessed of the best, if not the only se-
cret of happiness; and I am sure I can
wish you no greater blessing than a conti-
nuance of this grace and heavenly disposi-
tion.

S E R M O N

I not less degraded by the duties of my
social employment, or by those which
nature has enjoined us to perform for
each other. Do I not at some times
realise the same myself above others? and
I not inclined to fancy my talents in
favour my interests in the light of good?
Do I not treat them roughly, roughly
tyrannically; not worthily draw a veil
into the eye that looks up to me for
support? — If you can answer these
questions to your own satisfaction, it is not
the temper and habit of your soul; you
are possessed of the best; it is not the only re-
citer of happiness; and I am glad I can
wish you no greater blessing than a conti-
nuance of this grace and heavenly dispo-
sition.

EXAMON

S E R M O N VIII.

ON TEMPERANCE.*

I COR. XV. 32.

Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.

WHILE the severer moralists of antiquity were engaged in laborious researches into the nature of man, the ends of his creation, his relation to the sovereign Author of his being; and from these attempted to deduce the proper constituent principles of human felicity; the gay votaries of Epicurus reduced the whole of moral science to a few short and pointed aphorisms, calculated, it may well be supposed, rather to supersede the labour of study, than to induce to it; to captivate the fancy, to enliven conversation,

* Preached at St. Paul's Cathedral, March 25, 1787.

and,

and, by a brilliancy of wit and a shrewdness of expression, to silence rather than convince their opponents.

One of their leading maxims is that alluded to in the words of my text. It affords, indeed, one of the most plausible arguments in favour of a life of sensual pleasure. Nor has its influence been confined to the professed disciples or to the age of Epicurus; but, at this day, we meet with a maxim of similar import among those whom the complaisance of the age has dignified with the appellation of men of pleasure, or men of the world: "A short life and a merry one" is the modern translation of the ancient Epicurean proverb.

As a contrary doctrine, however, has been asserted by some characters of the highest reputation for knowledge and sagacity; and particularly by those, who have professed the Gospel-system of morality; it will perhaps not be thought unseasonable to bestow some little attention on an investigation of the truth and reasonableness of these

these different opinions. In the course of our examination it will be proper to inquire, first, whether to *eat and to drink* be the sole purpose of human life; and consequently, whether to resign ourselves to the pleasures of appetite be really conducive to our present happiness: and secondly, whether the maxim be well grounded on the popular argument, *To-morrow we die*.

The limited portion of happiness, which we are capable of attaining in this life, not less than the shortness of life itself, seems to afford a presumption, that we are to make the most of those enjoyments, that are within our reach. The prospects of a future state of happiness, in a new-created world, appear too distant to captivate or allure the man of strong and impatient appetites, and of sanguine affections; the uncertainty, too, as to the nature of those enjoyments, the darkness and perplexity in which they are involved, afford a further and still stronger inducement to seize those gratifications which are present and certain.

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It may be said, “ that the Deity, in creating a world of pleasurable and inviting objects, certainly did not create them for nothing; did not intend to debar us from the use and enjoyment of them. Has he given us appetites which ought not to be satisfied? or can it be supposed ungrateful to him, that we act conformably to those principles, which he has implanted in our natures? *To eat and to drink* cannot be contrary to his divine will, since he has made the gratification of those appetites not only pleasant, but necessary; and, if they really promote our happiness here, let us embrace the opportunity, *for to-morrow we die.*”

That God has indeed given us appetites to be satisfied, and a number of excellent creatures to satisfy them in their utmost extent, is true. That to eat and to drink may be productive of a certain degree of pleasure, we will not deny. But, that these are the chief of human delights, or the ends for which man is created, is a principle

principle destructive in its consequences, and capable of refutation even by the evidence of experience. If these be the chief of pleasures, the brute-creation, nay, the vilest and most contemptible of them, are superior to man, and possess a much more exalted degree of felicity. But, after all that we can do, it is impossible to confine our views altogether to the present. It is the nature of man to look forward to the future, and the expectation of that future will unavoidably mix itself with the enjoyment of the present. If this be the case, much of the Epicurean argument will appear to be erected with little or with no foundation. The pleasures of appetite are momentary ; and, if not actually attended with disgust, are seldom capable of supplying, upon reflexion, any true satisfaction or delight.

We may, on this occasion, retort the argument upon our adversaries ; we may reply, if to eat and to drink be the sole or even the principal end of human existence,

why are these other much more complex and extensive faculties and passions lavished upon us? Why have we minds elevated to the contemplation of the noblest and most exalted objects? Memories capable of collecting and preserving a series of intellectual truths? Imaginations, that will wander into worlds unknown? Hopes, that pursue pleasures beyond the boundaries of human existence? Much more limited faculties would have sufficed for a life of mere animal and sensual gratification. Nay, what is still more extraordinary, these other faculties and passions serve commonly to interrupt and to diminish the sensual enjoyments.

God, by the voice of nature, has indeed commanded us, *to eat and to drink*; but, neither God, Nature, nor Reason has warranted excess in the gratification of these appetites. Ask the slave of sensuality, *what fruit had you in these things?* — Ask him, in the tedious hours, that succeed a satiety of pleasure, (and how numerous are these, when

when compared with the hours of what he calls enjoyment !) — Ask him, when deprived of health ; when, lingering out an uneasy existence in a state of listless solitude, he is destitute of present bliss, has no consolation in reverting to the past, and dares not lift up his eyes to look forward to the future : — Ask him, when ruined and undone ; his fortune dissipated ; his reputation gone ; his society avoided ; perhaps not only in want of the luxuries, but even of the common necessities of life : — Ask him, if to *eat, drink, and be merry*, be the certain means of procuring even temporal felicity ? It cannot surely be reasonable or prudent, for the pleasure of a moment, to expose ourselves to years of pain and infirmity ; to squander away our health and reputation, and all the constituents of happiness for the remainder of our lives.

That Nature and Reason point out excess and intemperance at least not to be the end of man's creation, will sufficiently appear, if we but consider, that there is no

man but is ashamed of these vices when detected in them; that they blunt and destroy the faculties of the mind; that they extinguish the natural independence and dignity of man, and reduce him to the meanest expedients for the gratification of his appetite; that they expose us to the commission of almost every other vice, sometimes involuntarily, when the reason is clouded and confused by excess, and generally by the force of habitual depravity. Very different, in their nature and effects, are the pleasures of intellect, the acquirement of knowledge, the service of our Creator, the performance of the moral duties. These can never be attended with repentance, shame, or mental uneasiness. They are constant, and not liable to interruption; and those, who have made the experiment upon both, will inform you, that they are infinitely more diversified, more lasting, and more exquisite, than all that sense can present to our acceptance.

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The fact is, if it were possible to admit the sensual pleasures to be the chief business, and to constitute the chief happiness of life, the end would be counteracted by the unlawful and excessive indulgence of them. The writings of antiquity, and even of the Epicureans themselves, are full of aphorisms in commendation of the blessings of moderation ; proving, that occasionally to forbear is to heighten enjoyment ; that satiety is uniformly attended with disgust ; that a sound body and a good appetite are the hand-maids of pleasure, which it is impossible for him to retain, who leads a life of continual dissipation.

Such would be the state of the case, if natural religion only were known upon earth, and if the will of GOD had never been revealed to man. But, since the ALMIGHTY has thought proper to submit us to this state of probation ; since he has made these the absolute terms of our acceptance with him, namely, that we mortify or subdue every *inordinate affection* ; that we *keep*

under the body, and bring it into subjection; that we make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; since this is the case, there is, there can be, no plea for the stupidity of those, who adopt the maxim of an ancient atheistical sect. For, thus the matter stands with us: either the Scriptures are a forgery, and their authors impostors; or thou, who livest in pleasure, art dead while thou livest; thou, who bearest the name of CHRIST in vain, art altogether in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity! In thy pursuit of enjoyment, thou shalt find nothing but satiety, disgust and repentance. A debilitated constitution, an aching head, a reproachful conscience, a ruined fortune, a lost reputation, will be thy portion in this world; without the smallest hope of consolation, with rather indeed the certain expectation of misery, in another.

The stupidity of the maxim can only be equalled by that of the argument, which is alleged in its support: *for, to-morrow we die.* It is right, indeed, that the intemperate

perate person should be prepared for death, for he frequently meets it prematurely. Many, in the height of a debauch, are cut off by sudden disease; not to speak of the brawls and quarrels, the numerous accidents to which such a course of life is inevitably exposed. But, has he, who discourages thus familiarly about death, considered what it is *to die*? Has he considered, that it is to be rudely torn in a moment, in the *twinkling of an eye*, from all he loved, valued, or desired? That it is the painful bursting of these vital cords? That, on the supposition most favourable to him, it is to sink into nothing? to lose sensation, motion, thought and remembrance? “to become a kneaded clod?” But, has he considered it in another, far more awful view? Has he considered the great probability, let me say the certainty, of an after-state? Has he considered, then, that to die is to be hurried off, in the very maturity of his sin, to the presence, and before the throne of that GREAT BEING, whose majesty he
has

has affronted, whose commandments he has trampled on? Has he considered what ensues? that it is punishment eternal, not to be described, not indeed to be conceived? If the maxim, which has been the subject of our animadversion, be folly and contradiction even in the mouth of an impious Epicurean; surely to him, who has the remotest belief in the Gospel of CHRIST, or in any part of the Holy Scriptures; who has even a suspicion, that they may chance to be true, the idea of *to-morrow we die*, “a short life and a merry one,” must be fraught with absurdity, with impiety, with every thing dangerous and detestable in the extreme.

Go to the dying-bed of some unregenerate sinner; of some *fool*, who *bath said*, in his heart, *there is no GOD*; of some thoughtless Epicurean, who has steered his course by the destructive maxim, which is exposed in the text, whose existence has been short, and what he perhaps called merry. Observe then the agonizing sorrows that await
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on guilt in the last stage of its existence; observe the racking pains of a diseased body, heightened by the more excruciating tortures of the mind; observe the awakened conscience willing to disbelieve a future state, but finding it impossible. Observe this, and, if you can, return to the house of feasting and of jollity. — If you can, squander your time and your salvation in *chambering and wantonness*, in *drunkenness and riot*; if you can, *eat, drink, and be merry*, and console yourself with the exhilarating reflexion, *To-morrow we die.*

SERMON

[illegible]

S E R M O N IX.

ON THE LICENTIOUSNESS OF THE TONGUE.*

MATTHEW XXVI. 74.

Then began he to curse and to swear.

WHEN Ignorance or Profligacy would calumniate religion, or apologize for depravity, it is no uncommon device to arraign the errors of those characters, whom the Scripture-history has represented as highly illustrious, and in some degree sacred; those who, for some particular actions or virtues, are depicted as favourites in the sight of heaven.

Thus, by the malignancy of human folly, that unexampled simplicity, that strict adherence to the genuine form of truth, which might be insisted upon as one of the most powerful arguments in favour of the

* Preached at St. Anne's, Westminster, Sept. 25, 1785.

sacred

sacred writers, is perverted to the worst of purposes. Had they (after the manner of other historians*) represented their heroes with all the pomp of imaginary virtue; had they exhibited only the extremes of moral excellence and moral depravity, such as common observation assures us exist only in the regions of fancy; with what triumph would the circumstance be converted to an impeachment of their veracity? It is to their credit that no such highly-coloured portraits are to be found in their writings: the plain and unadorned facts are simply recorded; no deviation from the order of the narrative, either for the purpose of censure or panegyric, is admitted; the author cautiously avoids intruding himself upon the eye of the reader;

* I scarcely know any history, which does not contain some of these *faultless monsters*. Tacitus, who is deservedly celebrated for his penetration, and admirable art in the developing of the human character, is not destitute of them. His Germanicus, his Poetus, and some other instances, are certainly out of nature; though not quite so romantic and inconsistent as the Julian of a modern historian.

nor is the simple majesty of truth sacrificed to the tinsel of epithet, or the quaintness of antithesis.

To expect, however, from human nature, a degree of perfection, which can be the lot of no created being; to make no account of the influence of moral causes on the mind of man, betrays a deficiency, not only in those vulgar accomplishments, religion and common-sense, but in what, with some, I will not say with most, are in much higher estimation, knowledge, philosophy, and discernment. Can it be philosophical to annihilate every distinction of times and circumstances? to allow nothing to the general want of civilization, to the ferocity, the sensuality, the ignorance incidental to the early periods of society? To the Jews *many things were permitted for the hardness of their hearts*; and he is but a poor moralist, who is not sensible, that a degree of science and civilization, much higher than existed under the Jewish republic, is essentially necessary to fit mankind for the reception

reception of a refined system of ethics. I cannot help suspecting, therefore, after all that has been said, that the Apostle Paul will be found a more candid reasoner, and a more enlightened philosopher, than those with whom we are at present contending: *the times of this ignorance*, says he, *God winked at*; and waited for *the dispensation of the fulness of time*, which made men meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*

To suppose, again, that particular examples of imperfection afford room either to question the reality of virtue, or to deny our obligation to it; that the weakness of one man will justify the sin of another, can be the error only of a very untutored mind. Must a character, to deserve the appellation of religious, not only possess the virtues of a man, but of a god? Must we expect to find in it no taint, no seasoning of human passion and weakness, in the most arduous

* Acts xvii. 30. Eph. i. 10. Col. i. 13.

circumstances,

circumstances, in the hard struggles of adversity, and the still severer trials of unlimited prosperity; amidst the vanities of courts, the society of flatterers, and the imbecillity of age.*

Far, therefore, from esteeming the transaction recorded in the words of my text a justification of profane or indecent language; let me flatter myself, that it will afford to this assembly an useful lesson against the LICENTIOUSNESS OF THE TONGUE; that it will teach them to set a guard upon their lips, as well as upon their conduct; to *restrain their tongue from evil, and their lips from speaking guile.*

It is, I presume, almost unnecessary to remind you, that the offending person, spoken of in the text, is Peter:—not only an apostle, but one of the chief of the apos-

* See the Bishop of Chester's admirable and truly-philosophical Vindication of the Character of David. It was printed as a single Sermon, and surely it is to be regretted that it is not inserted in his excellent Collection of Sermons, lately published.

ties : — one on every occasion distinguished by his faith, as well as by his zeal in maintaining it ; the most ardent friend, the most forward disciple of his blessed Master. But, my brethren, the nature of the sin cannot be altered by the dignity of the person in whom it predominates ; and the only rational inquiry is, not who has been found guilty of this particular crime, but what is the crime itself, and what are its consequences. So little advantage, however, will the common swearer derive from this example of Peter, that there are circumstances, which render the case altogether inapplicable to his own, and prove it the most impotent of all possible excuses for the licentiousness of the tongue.

In the first place, though the Jewish law had forbidden the sacred name of GOD to be vainly or irreverently used, it does not appear (at least according to the mode of interpretation pursued in the Rabbinical schools) to have been equally severe against other oaths, and other species of profaneness.

ness. Christianity, as it holds forth greater advantages to its votaries, so it requires from them a much greater degree of purity and exactness in the performance of every duty. It enjoins us: *Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; but let your communication be yea and nay.* Now, the doctrines of CHRIST, though they were indeed partially explained and published by our Lord himself, were not collected and formed into a system at the time of this defection of Peter. Peter might possibly not have been present at that part of our Lord's sermon, which regarded this particular branch of discipline; or, if present, it is possible enough that, among such a multitude of precepts, one of them might be overlooked; or, at least, the impression might be transitory, and not such as to force itself, on all occasions, upon his recollection. It does not appear, that Peter dealt irreverently with the sacred name of his Creator on this occasion: he only *began*

to curse and to swear. Peter was still a Jew, and, as a Jew, his offence was less than that of a Christian, who swears at all; and much less than that of one who presumes *to take the name of the Lord his God in vain.*

Secondly. It is on all parts agreed, that Peter, at the time of the denial of CHRIST, was very far from being in such a state of moral and Christian perfection, as is termed, in the language of Scripture, a state of regeneration, or renewal of heart and life. His zeal, it is true, was great; but, he had been but very lately converted, and evil habits are not to be surmounted at once. The time of his probation was very short, when he was called upon to this severe trial; and there is reason to believe he had been before a notorious sinner, for, the first instance of his conversion was a confession of his conscience: *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!* — Not to mention, that he had not yet received the Holy Ghost. Very different was the conduct of Peter, when confirmed in the faith. Before the
chief

chief priests and elders summoned to appear at the peril of his life, he did not then *begin to curse and to swear*; but *preached Jesus boldly*, and testified, *saying, we ought to obey God rather than men*; and, when persecuted and beaten, he departed, *rejoicing that he had been counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ*.

In the third place. It must be indeed confessed, that Peter, on this occasion, swore falsely. But, let us consider, that his life was in immediate danger: *Skin for skin*, says Satan in Job; *all that a man hath will he give for his life*. The spirits of Peter were at that moment depressed by every circumstance that could conspire to deprive him of his fortitude, and disturb and perplex the human feelings. He saw the man in whom he trusted delivered up, and unable to assist him. He saw his friends and companions deserted, and he himself alone in the hands of an enraged multitude, disposed, with all the rage and violence of popular fury, to put him to an instant and

cruel death : and, shall the common swear-er, who swears falsely on the most trivial occasion ; who swears indeed without considering whether what he swears be true or false ; who swears wantonly, and without the smallest motive or necessity, think to justify himself by such an example ?

Fourthly. Though *Peter began to curse and to swear*, none has ever presumed to assert, that this was no crime in him. On the contrary, it remains, to this very hour, a stain upon his character, which all his meritorious actions, his unremitted zeal, his sufferings, his martyrdom, are scarcely sufficient to expunge. You, who have sworn, not for the sake of life, but out of pure wantonness, out of an habitual contempt for your SAVIOUR and your GOD : — Has your repentance ever equalled that of Peter ? Did you ever *go out*, when you had committed such a crime, *and weep bitterly* ? Say not, in extenuation, that Peter added to this guilt, that of the denial of his Lord. — Your whole life has been a
constant

constant denial, a contempt of him and his commandments, which when you perversely transgress, and particularly when you transgress by treating his ever-sacred name in an irreverend and indecent manner, you most effectually deny him.

It is a very trite observation, that, of all vices, profaneness is that, which is least productive of either profit or of pleasure; indeed I believe it will be a very difficult matter to specify any one advantage resulting from it, or any one rational motive for the practice of it. It cannot be necessary to confirm every common assertion in conversation with an oath: it is the worst compliment we can possibly pay to ourselves, to afford any room for suspicion that our word would not be taken on every trifling occasion. It is a demeaning of ourselves; it is an affront upon our company; and, there is this further absurdity attending it, that he, who cannot be believed on his word, is seldom credited on his oath.

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But, the truth is, this is very seldom, if ever, the motive to common swearing. It is in general intended to give an air of boldness and courage;* or else to fill up the vacancies of conversation, where there is a barrenness of understanding, and to substitute words in the place of ideas. As to the first, give me leave to observe, *that* is no true courage, which is founded in folly; and that affectation of courage, which bids defiance to the MAJESTY OF HEAVEN, to decency, good order, and good manners, must be folly in the extreme. It is no uncommon artifice of cowardice to make a show of bravery where the danger seems remote; I must however remark, that the device but seldom succeeds, even with the very vulgar: when so much pains are ta-

* It is therefore commonly affected by very young, and very ignorant persons, just emerging from a state of boyhood, and is one of those artifices which they practise to appear manly before their time; it however never fails to have a contrary effect, and to make their youth and their folly more apparent.

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ken to acquire the appearance of any thing, a suspicion always arises, that the reality is wanting; and the end is actually counteracted by the imprudent means, which are employed to effect it.

The other plea is, I confess, somewhat more specious; I am ready to admit, that a scarcity of ideas is, on some occasions, an inconvenience; and, very possibly, the limited faculties of some persons may absolutely require the assistance of certain common-place phrases, and even of oaths, to give them the appearance of speaking animals. As the reputation, however, of a barren understanding is not very agreeable, and as the device is now detected and exposed, I would not advise any person, who perceives in himself a want of ideas, to put in practice so hackneyed a stratagem; I would rather advise him to avoid profaneness as he would avoid the reputation of ignorance, emptiness, and weakness of understanding.

Indeed;

Indeed; as knowledge becomes more diffused, and as conversation improves, I trust I am not mistaken in the hope that profaneness is at present going gradually out of fashion. I know that it is of the utmost importance to every person, who wishes to write or to speak with elegance or correctness, to observe a delicacy and politeness of language in his common conversation. The style, which is eked out with oaths or common-place expressions of any kind, will naturally be lame and incorrect on occasions, when these cannot be introduced; whoever, therefore, would appear either the gentleman or the scholar, ought, on every account, to avoid them.

There are a few persons, I fear, with whom religious motives will have little weight upon this occasion. These persons, however, I would admonish, that it is paying too high a compliment to that religion, which they affect to despise, to make use of language, which is utterly destitute of force or meaning, if the system to which
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it relates be quite destitute of foundation. They, therefore, at the very best, subject themselves to the imputation of talking nonsense ; with the addition of another disagreeable circumstance, namely, that they may possibly be suspected of having some little notion or apprehension of that religion, the peculiar language of which they condescend to employ.

To those, who have any degree of faith in the truth of revelation, the absurdity of this vice must be instantly apparent. It must be instantly apparent, that the vices of the tongue are intimately connected with the vices of the heart ; that an abandonment of principle, a levity of manners will constantly accompany a levity and licentiousness of conversation. Our minds are the creatures of habit ; our actions are the consequents of our ideas. Profaneness, therefore, naturally lessens those respects, which ought ever to be esteemed sacred. The tongue cannot use the name of god in a free and unlicensed manner, without

out taking from that reverence, which the welfare of society and of our own souls requires we should ever retain for him. The solemn oaths, which Justice employs for the general safety and tranquillity, become a mockery and a jest in the eye of him who swears commonly, wantonly and falsely. In a word, since the ALMIGHTY has thought proper to prohibit it in so solemn a manner; to practise a vice, which neither can contribute to our temporal interest or our temporal pleasure, is certainly but few degrees short of actual insanity.

All vices are more easily prevented than reformed; and, as this is not a vice of passion, but of habit only, and is frequently, I might say generally acquired by imitation only; one most obvious mode of preventing it, is to avoid the company and conversation of those, whose contagious manners may affect the rectitude of our hearts, and especially of those minor wits, who would purchase at an easy rate a few transient applauses from dulness and ignorance, by re-
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tailing the trite objections of infidel and profligate writers. In this too, too liberal age, such a caution will be thought, or rather will be said, to favour of bigotry. But, let us not, I intreat you, in our zeal for toleration, forget that there is a very ample difference between persecution and encouragement; between actually laying violent hands upon a man for the sake of his opinions, and giving countenance and support to those opinions by taking that man to our bosom. The utmost stretch of charity surely cannot require an intire sacrifice of common sense and private happiness. It is impossible to esteem that man my friend, who would deprive me of every dearest hope, of every best of comforts, would leave me without a single motive to virtue, a single principle of belief. Let such a man enjoy with freedom his own gloomy and discontented disposition; but let me enjoy at least the same equal liberty, and give me leave only to make choice of my company. May the GOD of truth and righteousness
ever

ever defend us from that liberality, which shall induce us to become tame and patient spectators of blasphemy and impiety, *to stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful.*

This caution applies principally, indeed, to the inexperienced and the young. To those sinners, who may have deviated from the paths of truth and piety, and yet wish to return, it may be satisfactory to add, that, of all vices, this of profaneness is perhaps the most easy to be reformed. Even where the habit is already fixed, a few exertions will reclaim it. It is but putting a slight restraint upon yourself at first; and this restraint will be attended with a further advantage, namely, that it will reduce you, by degrees, to the habits and order of a religious life; teach you to subdue other evil propensities, make you acquainted with discipline, and render it easy and commodious to you.

To insist on the danger of continuing in the habit must be totally unnecessary after
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what has been said, and since the consequences of unrepented sins are so notorious, and so generally understood. There is, however, one doctrine of our religion, which will perhaps be more effectual than any other in promoting your reformation. I therefore conclude with earnestly recommending it to your most serious attention. As Moses gave the law to the children of Israel, I give it you *for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes*; for a maxim to be engraven on your hearts, and of which you are never to lose sight. *By our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned; and, at the last great day, every IDLE WORD must be accounted for.*

SERMON

what has been said, and since the consequences of unrepented sin are so numerous and so generally evident. That is, however, one decline of our religion, which will perhaps be more effectual than any other in promoting your reformation. I therefore conclude with earnestly recommending it to your most serious attention. As Moses gave the law to the children of Israel, I give it you for a solemn warning, and for the foundation of your hearts. Let a maxim to be engraven on your hearts, and of which you are never to lose sight. For we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned; and at the last great day, every word will be accounted for.

SERMON

S E R M O N X.

ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PASSIONS.*

GAL. V. 17.

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other.

IN an age, when much declamation has been expended in favour of a philosophy independent of the Scriptures, it may possibly be thought visionary and enthusiastic to refer the curious inquirer into the mechanism of the human mind to the Gospel of CHRIST. That in this system the springs of action are not always minutely investigated, nor the several principles detailed with the pompous display of philosophic precision, I am ready to grant. The aim in-

* Preached at St. Anne's, Westminster, September, 1786.

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deed of the Gospel is different ; its purpose is to instruct by precept, not to amuse by speculation ; and, as its immediate relation is to practice, its maxims are plain, forcible, and comprehensive, rather than curious or abstruse. The foundations, however, are not the less solid, nor the structure less consistent. Every conclusion, if investigated with the nicest and most scrupulous attention, will be found perfectly conformable to the soundest philosophy, and deduced from the most intimate acquaintance with the mind of man.

Such is the nature of the proposition contained in the words of my text. It is a truth, which appeals to common experience for confirmation, and yet is founded on some of the most curious principles in moral science. That man, in his temporal state, is subject to the influence of two distinct principles, the sensitive and the rational soul, the flesh and the spirit, was one of the leading maxims in the best philosophy of the ancient world. The former of these

these seems to depend altogether on the organization of our mortal frame; the latter appears to be the action or energy of that immortal part, which derives its existence more immediately from the divine essence, and, we are informed, bears in some degree the stamp of the divine image. The one seems necessary to attach us to this present life, and to lead us cheerfully through our pilgrimage; the other prevents the too great violence of this attachment, and is even necessary to direct the affections to their proper objects. Passion is the spring, which in this life brings us forth to action, and gives a consequence to the things upon earth; reason checks, confines, and regulates its excesses.

As passion is no other than a modification of the animal appetites, it is justly esteemed the inferior principle; it lives with the body, it dies with the body; and, as reason is the effect of that immortal energy, which even in this life is more immediately under the direction of the AL-

MIGHTY, with which indeed his Holy Spirit is supposed occasionally to co-operate, it is that which gives us this rank and eminence among created beings, and is the ground-work of science and of social happiness. The former we enjoy in common with the brute-creation, and, when indulged to excess, it levels us with inferior animals, or perhaps degrades us beneath them; by the latter we are enabled to attain the knowledge, and to conciliate the love of our great CREATOR, and indeed to raise ourselves to the condition of angels.

Besides the uses, therefore, which I before pointed out for these distinct principles, there is yet another: for, they appear essential to this state of probation, to which our divine master has thought proper to submit us, preparatory to a state of more perfect felicity. Passion is the source of all our guilt; hence proceed murders, thefts, adulteries, and that numerous train of moral evils, by which human nature is debased, and human society distracted: Reason

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son is the corrector of these abuses, by which we foresee their consequences and the means of avoiding them: and thus (according to the apostle) a perpetual conflict is maintained between reason and passion, the flesh and the spirit.

But the GOD, whom we adore, is a GOD of mercy; and, as such, it is consistent with his gracious providence to incline the balance in our favour, and to afford us all advantages in a contest where our all is at stake. It is the express purpose of Christianity to come in aid of the rational principle, and enable us to vanquish effectually all our spiritual enemies, by making known to us the will of our CREATOR, and directing our view to consequences, above the reach of the human understanding unassisted by divine revelation. Thus Reason tells us, that it is our interest to regulate the passions, and to hold them in proper subjection; Christianity tells us, that such is the express command of our heavenly Father. Reason informs us, that to be mo-

derate and virtuous will insure our temporal happiness, and that vicious courses will end in the ruin of our fortune, our reputation, and our health: but Christianity announces to us an eternity of happiness or misery, dependent upon our conduct; and assures us, that, if we become captives to our corrupt passions, we shall feel all the weight of almighty vengeance, through ages of pain and torment, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

After this, my brethren, can it be necessary to enter more minutely into the imprudence, the folly, the danger, the damnation of indulging the corrupt and vicious propensities? Can it be necessary, to direct your attention to the fate of states and empires, to exhibit there the vices of passion bringing down upon the guilty nation anarchy and desolation; to exhibit the dissipated and abandoned conspiring against the community, and sacrificing, to their own corrupt lusts, the interests of millions? Observe well the selfishness, the rapacity, which

which are occasioned by ungoverned passions and desires. Observe all the delicate bonds, which connect men in society, and form our best enjoyments, rudely burst asunder. Hear the complaints of the deluded friend, the injured husband, the ruined virgin, the miserable parent. Mark the horrid tales of perjuries, breaches of trust, seductions, assassinations, parricides! and then judge whether that people does not exist under the severest curse of the ALMIGHTY, whom he has delivered over to the dominion of luxury and passion.

But, to judge more perfectly concerning the necessity of subduing our passions, let us but remark their effects upon the individual. The man, who is under the dominion of passion, is incapable of any great or virtuous undertaking. The abject slave of appetite, he mingles with the common instinctive herd, and his thoughts are never elevated for a moment above the groveling pursuits of the brute-creation. Propelled by the rage of passion, every trifling inci-

dent is able to disappoint and disconcert him; and, as the gratification of appetite is transitory, the very completion of his wishes is satiety and disgust. As guilt is the consequence of every unlawful passion, he has to encounter shame, and remorse of conscience, and the fear of discovery. As expence and profusion are ever connected with vicious pursuits, he is generally in want, he is haunted with importunate creditors, he is abridged of his liberty, he is obliged to submit to innumerable meanesses: and possibly he is at length engaged in some criminal action to supply his prodigality, which brings him, with sorrow and late contrition, to an ignominious end.

The still more alarming effects of criminal passions in the other sex are too obvious to require a detail. The deluded female commences her career with public infamy and scorn; and ends it with vice, drunkenness, ill-treatment, want, cold, hunger, disease, and untimely death.

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To these, give me leave to add, on religious principles, another argument: and that is, unless the spirit be victorious over the passions, you can have no part or inheritance in the kingdom of God. The grace of God is a stranger to the heart, while sinful passions are predominant there. This is in truth the only mark, by which we are enabled to judge of the state of our souls. If all be tranquil and composed; if the love of virtue, *the peace of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ*, be within you, you are safe and happy. If violent and unlawful passions, if unruly appetites and desires have possession of your heart, conclude that God *has given you over to a reprobate mind*, and nothing less than immediate repentance can save you from utter perdition.

It would doubtless, my brethren, be highly satisfactory to be able to guide you out of the track of these alarming evils, and to be instrumental in rescuing you from the fatal empire of passion. Your own sagacity will point out many motives and expedients;

pedients ; and, if you heartily wish and resolve to dedicate yourselves to the practice of virtue, the grace of GOD will strengthen and assist you. I shall nevertheless briefly state a few of the most practicable means of cultivating good and virtuous affections, and of eradicating vicious and corrupt propensities from the heart.

First. Let me exhort you, earnestly to recommend yourselves to the peculiar care and attention of the Divine Providence; to pray, morning and evening, that he will strengthen your good intentions, and correct whatever he observes amiss. For, if you lose your religion, or become remiss in these duties, I must tell you, that every other foundation of morality is laid upon the sand; and, if you prove good, it will be, as it were, by chance.

Secondly. Whatever leisure you may have, employ it in the reading of good books. By the term *good books*, I do not mean to confine you to books of devotion; I mean books that will inform your understanding

standing and refine your sentiments; all, in a word, that have a virtuous or moral tendency. By thus cultivating the intellectual pleasures, your minds will become elevated above the sensual; you will experience enjoyments of the sublimest nature, and unalloyed by any mixture of *gall or bitterness*.

Thirdly. You cannot be too careful in the choice of your company. It is almost unnecessary to inform you, that the instances are few of persons depraved by the natural force of passion, in comparison with the multitudes who owe their ruin to the allurements of bad company. Connected with this, is the obligation to avoid most carefully every species of indelicacy or licentiousness in conversation. In an age, indeed, when almost every person aims at the reputation of wit, it is no wonder that obscene allusions should be in some measure in fashion, since they enable a man to purchase the character at so very cheap a rate. That mind, however, which can condescend

scend to entertain a company in such a manner; that company, who can patiently lend their attention to such entertainment, must be filthy and depraved in no trifling degree. He must be as weak as well as a wicked man, who wishes to publish his vices. It may, therefore, contribute to lessen the taste for this species of mock wit, to remark, that it can only be from a barrenness of real wit that men have recourse to it; and I have seldom known it practised but by very shallow persons. Mark the observation, that, unless it be through a preconcerted design upon the innocence of some of the company, the man, who offends your modesty and delicacy by licentious conversation, is not only a very wicked person, but a fool.*

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* The *double entendre* is a species of wit, for which, if we have regard to the analogy of the name, we are chiefly indebted to our neighbours on the continent; and such a practice is perfectly consistent with the frivolity and littleness which characterize that nation. A Frenchman is perpetually attempting to be witty, without any fund of knowledge or information to furnish him with materials. A certain critic, whose opinion indeed on this subject is not of very high

authority,

In the fourth place. Be *temperate in all things*. Those, who indulge in the excesses of the table can never answer properly for their own conduct; as, at seasons, they will not, they cannot, be their own masters. Besides that temperance and sobriety are among the first duties of our religion, and the practice of them will render us more particularly objects of the divine favour and protection.

Lastly. Apply diligently to some lawful calling, which will absorb your attention, and engage that active principle, the mind. Suffer your thoughts as little as possible to wander from the track of virtue; and, if the enemy of mankind should at any time assail you, (for, it is in the hours

authority, taking his instance from the French nation, has pretended to deny the well-established maxim, that *a regard to decency* is to be accounted among the certain marks of civilization. If, however, that critic will have the goodness to look at a note in my translation of Bishop Lowth's Lectures, vol. ii. p. 318, he will find some other, not less decisive, proofs, that the French are by no means in that high state of civilization, which he seems to take for granted.

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of indolence that the tempter sows his tares,) be instantly upon your guard, and divert your thoughts into some other channel either of business or devotion.

The force of habit, and the accommodating power of the human mind, afford encouragement not only to the young and innocent to persevere in the path of virtue, but even to those, who have been less cautious in their demeanour, to rectify their choice. The infinite superiority of the intellectual over the sensual pleasures has been asserted by all who have made the experiment; and this ought to be an inducement to every reflecting being to direct his attention to those nobler objects. To acquire good habits is almost as easy as to acquire bad ones; nay, those who are yet undepraved will have much more to surmount, will find more real difficulty, in deviating into vicious excesses, than in adhering to that order and regularity, in which they are already initiated; and even the habitually vicious will find the victory much easier than they

they at first conceive. The passions are furious assailants, but their ardour is presently quelled by a spirited resistance. No man, I presume, who has the remotest belief in the truth of revealed religion, can possibly be at ease in his conscience, while engaged in the commission of those crimes, the end of which he is convinced can be only a fearful *looking-for of judgement and fiery indignation*. You, who are involved in the giddy vortex of fashionable dissipation; you, who sin through ignorance perhaps of your danger, or at least for want of attending to it: — You I exhort to bestow one hour's serious consideration on this important subject. — *Behold, I call heaven and earth to record against you, this day, that I have set before you blessing and cursing, life and death.* — Go, then; and, if there be any consolation in Christ, if any fellowship of the Spirit: — Go, like the reformed Athenian youth, tear the ensigns of riot from your brow, the festal garlands

garlands from about your neck. * — You have a much greater Master to imitate. If the speech and practice of a heathen philosopher could work such a change in him; what ought the precepts of the Gospel, and the example of the SON OF GOD, to effect in us?

* Polemon, a young man of Athens of a dissolute character, entered the school of Xenocrates one day, intoxicated, and in the dress and character of a bacchanal, with a view of making merry at the expence of the philosopher. Xenocrates was just at that time discoursing upon temperance and modesty; the discourse made such an impression upon Polemon, that it produced an immediate change in his manners. He applied himself to philosophy, and succeeded to the care of that very seminary which he had attempted to disturb and insult. See Hor. L. ii. S. 3. Diog. Laert. L. 4. Val. Max.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

THE CHARACTERS OF THE HYPOCRITE AND THE
LIBERTINE COMPARED.*

MATTHEW V. 20.

For, I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

THE SCRIBES were the teachers and guardians of the Jewish law; they not only had the custody of the books of Moses and the prophets, but almost the exclusive right of expounding them to the people; and hence the term is frequently confounded with that of *lawyer*, intimating that part of their office, which respected the explaining and administering of the law. The college of scribes is generally supposed to have succeeded the college of

Preached at Fitzroy Chapel, October, 1781.

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prophets, in which all the youth destined for the sacred ministry were educated; so that, in its most extensive import, the word comprehended almost all the people of letters in the Jewish nation; but, in a more restricted sense, it seems to apply chiefly to those who were members of the Sanhedrim, or great ecclesiastical council, as our Lord intimates in these words: *the scribes and pharisees sit in Moses's seat.*

The PHARISEES were no other than a sect of Jews, who distinguished themselves by a particular appellation, on account of their peculiar opinions, and professed a superior degree of strictness and severity. As pharisees merely, they were not invested with any legal authority, but they had equal access with the rest of the nation to any of the offices or employments in the church. Accordingly we find that the scribes were taken indifferently out of all the Jewish sects, (for, about the decline of their empire and religion, they were divided into many.) This is evidenced in the case of St.

St. Paul, when the scribes were divided, the one part pharisees, the other sadducees.

The sectaries in general, and those who were of the scribes in particular, were the professed enemies of our blessed LORD; as is natural to men, who have high notions of themselves and of their own opinions. They saw with envy his growing reputation. The simplicity and purity of his doctrines offended them, who had been accustomed to consider piety as the concomitant only of ceremony, and the whole duties of mankind as placed in the external observances of the law. But, the chief cause of their envy was the danger which impended over their beloved system of ceremony and superstition; the apprehension, that his divine penetration would discover the hypocrisy of their religious professions, and that his daring hand would withdraw the veil, which craft and fanaticism had industriously woven.

That noble freedom of sentiment, that unreserved demeanour, which is ever con-

ned with virtue, is seldom acceptable to mankind, and least of all to the vicious. Resentment is a much easier exertion of the mind than reformation; and reproof is always so unpalatable a potion, that, however sweetened with tenderness and delicacy, it is seldom taken with such a willing mind as is necessary to the salutary end it is intended to accomplish.

But these were not to be considerations with the Redeemer of mankind. He knew that irreconcilable enmity must be the consequence of his boldness: but, truth and religion were in question. He despised earthly advantages. He was fearless of persecution. Death, with all its terrors, was to him a shadow. He was to conquer *this world, and the prince of this world. Hell and the grave* were to be subjected to him.

The applause, therefore, or the censure of men could not possibly affect his intentions: and the apprehensions of these corrupt ministers of religion were justified by the event. Instead of courting their favour,

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he attacks them without even that reserve, which worldly prudence would perhaps judge necessary, or which might leave an opening or excuse for reconciliation. Equally superior to their menaces and allurements, he exposes all their infamy; he exhibits the picture to public view: a picture, which will be instructive to the latest posterity, affording an excellent criterion for the discovery and detection of that most complex and intricate of vices, hypocrisy, by occasionally comparing their manners with our own.

Hypocrisy is a vice of a general character, and does not take its real form from any particular persuasion; a hypocrite is therefore the same in all ages, and whatever the church of which he professes himself a member: a pharisee, or a pretendedly austere Christian; a sadducee, or a modern assertor of the law of nature. It will not, consequently, be very surprizing, if on examination we find much congruity and re-

semblance in the manners of the hypocrites of ancient and modern times.

The first instance of the resemblance, which I shall mention, is, *the pharisees did all their deeds to be seen of men*. This is an invariable characteristic of hypocrisy, since it is impossible to deceive GOD, and since fortune or fame can be its only object. They accordingly loved *the uppermost rooms at feasts, the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets*. Nor are the hypocrites of our age materially different in this respect: for, whatever pretences they may make to humility, their ambition is *to be seen of men*; to acquire authority, to have their good actions applauded; to be distinguished as righteous, charitable, and devout. Thus they foolishly substitute the short-lived commendations of the unsteady multitude, in the room of the sincere gratulation of their own consciences, in the room of the applause of the discerning few, in fine, in the room of the ALMIGHTY's favour,

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These *whited sepulchres*, as they are emphatically styled, exhibited a constant display of sanctity and devotion. *For a pretence they made long prayers*; standing in the corners of the streets; not as persons animated with real piety, in secrecy and solitude. Such are the pretenders to religion in our days; they appear to give unremitted attendance to public worship; and, under the sanction of this appearance, conceal designs the most criminal and passions the most depraved. They fasted too, and assumed a sorrowful and mortified aspect: many of them indeed might probably imagine that these would serve instead of real, internal purity, and integrity of heart, instead of that religion which is evinced by facts, and which their own prophets had frequently assured them was absolutely necessary to give them favour in the sight of GOD.

There are other more minute points, in which the resemblance will still hold. The ancient hypocrites *made broad their phylacteries*:

ries : * the modern frequently affect a precision, if not a singularity, in their dress and manner. The ancient attended to the *washing of cups and vessels, and made clean the outside* : The modern are nice observers of every petty ceremony ; and, the omission of some unmeaning rite, some immaterial point of discipline, is to them of more consequence than the neglect of any great or essential virtue. But, though *they strained out a gnat, they swallowed a camel*. Fraud and covetousness were no crimes with them, provided they could pass unseen ; for, they *devoured widows houses ; they compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, and, when gained, they made him two-fold more a child of hell than themselves*. They *paid tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin* ; (they were scrupulously exact where the object was not worth finning for ;) *but they omitted* THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS OF THE LAW, *judge-*

* These phylacteries consisted of verses, or precepts, from the books of Moses and the prophets, written upon parchment, &c. and sewed upon their garments.

ment, mercy, and truth. To parallel these instances might perhaps not be utterly impossible, but it would be an invidious task. There is a GOD above, and a monitor within; take heed that ye offend neither the one nor the other.

Approach now, you, who pride yourselves, if I may so speak, in the sincerity of your sin! You, who despise dissimulation equally with — virtue. Now exult. — Now is your hour. You have seen religion made the cloak of vice; you have seen pretended sanctity shield from punishment — in this world. Proceed; tell us, “that piety is all an illusion;—that it is an instrument in the hands of the crafty.” — “Happy for us,” (you will add,) “this is not an age favourable to hypocrisy.” — Indeed it is not; and yet perhaps we are no gainers by the boasted revolution. Here, then, end the triumph of the libertine. — For, tell me, you who reason for yourselves, and are not carried along the stream of popular prejudice: because there is hypocrisy,

pocrisy, is there no such thing as real virtue? Because there are pictures, are there no originals? The hypocrite, indeed, abuses virtue, by using its semblance to evil purposes; but the libertine strikes at its very existence. The one tacitly confesses its excellence, while he pretends to imitate it; the other disowns its attributes, and spurns its authority. The one may indeed injure a few individuals; the other must injure the public, by supporting principles, and by affording an example, which sap the very foundations of all morality and good government.

But, are these characters so totally distinct, that the libertine is on every occasion free from hypocrisy? When some vile end is to be accomplished; when some criminal passion is to be gratified: does he then scruple to dissemble? No: — He affects to despise it, because his general conduct is too flagrant to admit of hypocrisy. He, who wears in common that disguise, must be a petty finner, or he is presently

presently detected. But, when every art is exhausted to support a tottering reputation, the last resource of profligacy is to intrench itself in an insolent effrontery, which sets at defiance God and man. Let us not mistake; there is a nearer affinity between these two denominations of sinners than either of them is willing to acknowledge. The hypocrite is no other than a painted libertine; and, when the varnish is washed away, he stands revealed just the same false reasoner, the same contemptible slave of appetite and passion, as the audacious profligate, who affects to disdain the concealment of his vices. That there is little temptation to hypocrisy, and little occasion for it at present, will not, I fear, prove to the honour of the present age; and yet there are not wanting persons unimpeachable in their own conduct; but even these are deficient in that delicacy of virtue, which should mark the professors of a pure religion. The truth is, a false refinement has made hypocrites of us all, and hypocrites

crites of the most dangerous kind; I mean, who impose upon themselves. We draw a veil over our own eyes, to save others the trouble of appearing in masquerade. Language is perverted, and the innocent and the guilty are undistinguished by proper appellations. Scepticism and profaneness are called liberality of sentiment: dissipation and extravagance assume the titles of fashion and refinement; impudence and indelicacy those of modest assurance, wit, and humour. Deliberate murder is termed an act of honour; and the extreme of licentiousness is dignified by the very polite and fashionable phrase, GAIETY. But, what is the true interpretation of this term, GAIETY? — It is a perpetual round of drunkenness and debauchery. — It is the infamy of gaming-houses. — It is to blaspheme GOD, to injure human society. If we inquire into the destruction of empires; its cause we shall find to have been, in general, a taste for this GAIETY. If we look into the disgrace and ruin of families, GAI-

ETY

ETY has effected it. GAIETY has seduced unguarded innocence; GAIETY has committed murder; GAIETY has, on some occasions, concluded its career by an end very unsuitable to the real import of the word, by suicide.

But, in the name of reason, is the man, who debases human nature below mere animal instinct; who has no enjoyments but of a sensual and depraved kind; who, with all the selfishness of sensuality, regards the whole human race, only as he can make them subservient to his gross ideas of pleasure; who has never considered the nature of moral good and evil; who lives destitute of any fixed principles, destitute of thought or reflexion; and, without rudder or compass, is driven about with every gust of passion; who either disbelieves in a God, or in fact denies his providence by acting continually in direct opposition to his divine commands; is this person likely to prove a steady friend, a trusty agent, a faithful and affectionate husband, a good father?

father? Or is he, who is thus infamous in private life, likely to be better in a public capacity? — “ But, he may reform.” Would to heaven, it were so easy a matter to step at once from the extreme of vice to that of religion and virtue! But, *there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance*; — and with reason, for it is a singular event. It requires no great exertion to refrain from sin at first; but, when once engaged, it is a sinking state, and requires a mighty force to extricate us. Nor indeed is this an age, as was before observed, to hope much for reformation; since libertines have now not only the advantage of passing without punishment or censure, but are as acceptable with the generality of the world, as if their characters were without a blemish. Thus then it stands: while vice is so successful, it is not likely to desist; and, unless all thinking persons would determine to treat it with that contempt and abhorrence it deserves,

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to shun the company of the abandoned, to expel them from their society ; we but expose ourselves to ridicule, when we urge repentance from what is apparently attended with so little inconvenience. Among the people of GOD, even in their most depraved state, some distinction was always maintained between the treatment of the opposite characters of vice and virtue, and the Scripture abounds with exhortations against the contagious nature of sin. *Enter not into the path of the wicked*, says the wisest of men ; *avoid it, pass not by it ; turn from it, and pass away*. Least of all is it consistent with the purity of our religion, thus to break down the barrier between good and evil, by putting them upon an equal footing. *Beware of evil-workers*, says the great apostle, *and be not thou partaker with them : shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord ? I wrote unto you*, says he in another place, *not to company with fornicators, or with the covetous, or with extortioners ; if any man, that is called a brother,*

a brother, be a fornicator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such a one, no, not to eat.

Thus far it appeared necessary to urge, lest, in avoiding one extreme, we should, as is too common, fall into another, yet more fatal. But what ! is there not another mode of action ? Is there not another course to steer ? Because we are not to imitate the corrupt manners of the scribes and pharisees, are we therefore to adopt those of the publicans and sinners ? We have seen that these forms of vice, however they may appear to differ, are more nearly related than is generally supposed ; — and, will not the compass of nature, reason, or religion, supply us with another character ? It will, my brethren, the real Christian, the true disciple of our Lord. Behold the portrait ; and I trust it is not quite out of nature, weak and imperfect as we are.

Mark, then, the beauteous assemblage. — Meekness and Simplicity are seated on his brow ; Patience and Humility dwell in his

his bosom ; and Cheerfulness, like a winged cherub, plays about his lips. Unpursued by a disordered conscience, unruffled by the intrusion of criminal passions or desires, that peace and serenity, which he himself possesses, he imparts to others ; and, like the sun, the noblest, and perhaps most useful object of the visible creation, he diffuses light and comfort to all around him. Although, like his blessed Master, he be *meek and lowly of heart*, like him affable and obliging, *apt to teach* ; he is too conscious of the dignity he acquires from the rectitude of his life to stoop to any thing mean or unworthy. Hypocrites and sinners may be, nay must be, slaves. The practical Christian only is free. He has no need of art, for he has nothing to conceal. He has made truth his study ; he knows its beauty and its worth. He is *instructed in the law of the Lord*, and he is ready to conform to the minutest branch of his duty. He has inquired into the nature of things ; he has seen the nothingness, the insipidity, the

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danger

danger of those gratifications, which engage the passions of less enlightened minds. He is satisfied that happiness can only, with any degree of reason, be placed in piety, probity and charity here below, and in the well-grounded expectation of eternal life, and a crown of glory hereafter.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

ON THE INSTITUTION OF PREACHING, AND THE
MEANS OF IMPROVEMENT IN RELIGIOUS
KNOWLEDGE.*

2 COR. XII. 14.

I seek not yours, but you.

WHEN the first teachers of our religion were called by the special appointment of ALMIGHTY GOD, they were called, not to a state of opulence, of splendour, and of worldly enjoyment; but, to a state of trouble, of persecution, and of sorrow. They were sent forth as *sheep in the midst of wolves*; they were accounted as victims, appointed to the slaughter. They were required to *forsake all*, even *father and mother*, nay, the dearest of temporal possessions, *life*

* Preached at the parish-church of the united parishes of St. George Botolph-lane, and St. Botolph Billingsgate, on being elected their lecturer.

itself. Though it is certain that many of them were necessitated to accept of such support as the circumstances of their followers could supply; and though in this they were authorized by our LORD himself, who commanded them, *into whatever house they entered, there to remain eating and drinking*, and for this plain reason, that *the workman is worthy of his hire*; yet, it is equally certain, that, by the same authority, they were prohibited from abusing this privilege: and some of them, who had the interests of the Gospel particularly at heart, seem to have taken no advantage whatever of it. The apostle of the Gentiles, from whose Epistle to the Corinthians I have selected the words of my text, *laboured working with his hands, lest*, by making it chargeable in its infant-state, he *should hinder the Gospel of Christ*. He therefore assures his Corinthian converts, that, though he had the same right with the other apostles to be maintained by them, indeed the right that every man who labours has to reap a livelihood

hood from his labour, yet he never was, and never would be burthensome to them : for, he adds in the words of my text, *I seek not yours, but you.*

Though the apostles were thus unfavourably situated in point of worldly lucre, yet, as rational persons, we are not to suppose that they acted without motives, or that a wild enthusiasm, without any prospect of real advantage, engaged them in a life of labour and perplexity. They were conscious they were acting under the appointment, and fulfilling the command, of the supreme Governor and Creator of the world. They felt, within their own bosoms, a conviction that they were ordained to a life of glory and immortality, and that their labours were consecrated to the noblest purposes ; that they were not only *working out their own salvation*, but that of others. They were endowed with all the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, and had ample scope for the gratification of all the benevolent affections in the divine power

of working miracles. Nor were they destitute even of earthly advantages. The whole of temporal felicity does not consist in the possession of wealth; nor even, as some of the philosophers absurdly supposed, in an easy and tranquil life. The apostles were possessed of a treasure far more estimable than these, the confidence and the love of their fellow-creatures. This was their earthly object, (and who could desire a better!) their heavenly object was of a still sublimer nature. It is a natural, it is a generous, and exalted passion, which the apostle expresses in the words of my text: *I seek not yours, but you.* “Think not that I regard your temporal possessions; that I look with a longing eye to that beloved *mammon* of which I observe you are so jealously watchful. Its advantages to such a man as myself would be trifling indeed; nay, the great object of my life would be counteracted by it. I despise sensual delights; and, for avarice, it is the passion of children for a glittering bauble, the attachment

attachment of fools without any solid ground of liking. I aspire to a nobler possession: it is yourselves that I covet; your hearts, your souls, what *neither rust nor moth can corrupt, and what thieves cannot break through and steal.* — It is, in a word, the glory of GOD, and of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. — It is your conversion, your improvement, your salvation which I covet.

If the ministers of the Gospel are not at this day possessed of advantages equivalent to those of the first professors of our faith: if they cannot raise the dead, heal the sick, cause the deaf to hear, or the dumb to speak; if they are denied the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit: if, on these accounts, they are less successful in their ministry, and are possessed of fewer means of attracting the admiration, and conciliating the esteem of mankind; it must be confessed, on the other hand, that, in the present circumstances of Christianity, their task is less arduous, and their situation more tranquil and secure. We are shielded,

by the mercy of Providence, from the iron hand of Persecution, and a wise establishment has not left us entirely to the caprice of Fortune for our daily subsistence. But, it does not follow from this, my brethren, that we are all of us determined to the service of the church by secular or mercenary motives. This is a slander originating in malice, and supported by ignorance alone. Permit me to trespass a little on your time, while I endeavour to remove an imputation so injurious and ill-founded. The nature of the revenues of the church of England is, in general, but imperfectly understood. It appears, however, by some late publications,* that the whole income of the church, including that of the bishops, the cathedral-churches, and even the two universities, and their respective colleges, is so inconsiderable, that, if EQUALLY divided among the whole body of the clergy, it

* See the Bishop of Landaff's Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the other publications on that controversy.

would

would not amount to one hundred and fifty pounds *per annum* to each: this, if there were no bishops or dignitaries, no universities for the education of youth. The distribution, it is true, is unequal, and in the ecclesiastical lottery there are some prizes. But, how few even of the beneficed clergy possess a clear income, *for life*, of five hundred pounds *per annum*? A sum, which would be accounted trifling in almost any other rank of life, and which is exceeded by the profits of many in the very inferior, and by almost all in the superior commercial professions. These, again, as I observed, are prizes, which are the fortune only of a chosen few. They are chiefly the property of noble and wealthy families, and are monopolized by the relations and dependants of the great. A course of services, or a fortunate connexion will sometimes promote a man of merit; but, it is a melancholy fact, that many, too many, whose parts and understandings would qualify them for the first offices of the
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the state, whose classical eloquence might have influenced senates, whose refined manners and conversation might have polished courts, are condemned, in the service of the church, to languish through a life of labour, in some despicable curacy, without distinction or reward.

It appears, from these observations, that he must be a weak man, who, without powerful connexions, enters into the church through the hope of profit or emolument. The truth is, the love of letters, or the love of God, or rather, as I trust is in general the case, both of them united, are the only rational motives to invite a man of any abilities into the ecclesiastical profession. A man, who is influenced by such motives as these, is not without his consolations: for, like the apostle, he *seeks not yours, but you*. There cannot be a more respectable character than a clergyman, who really discharges his duty; nor, in my mind, a more enviable situation than that of one, who discharges it to the satisfaction of his hearers.

ers. He is effectually serving GOD, and, if he be not possessed of wealth or dignity, these are amply compensated for by confidence and esteem.

Permit me, my brethren, to explain, in a few words, what I apprehend to be the true evangelical meaning of the phrase, *I seek not yours, but you*. It is not cold approbation, nay, it is not your private friendship, (estimable as indeed I account it,) that will satisfy a man zealous in the cause of CHRIST.—He ardently desires a more intimate union, an union in sentiment, an union in virtue. He wishes you all fellow-servants of the same Master with himself; *members of Christ's mystical body*: not bound by the uncertain bonds of earthly passion and interest, but by the everlasting union of righteousness and faith. In plain terms, what he seeks is *you*: — *you*, not only in this life, but another; your conversion, your improvement, your salvation.

To effect these purposes, there are two points of conduct indispensable on your parts:

parts : namely, frequent attendance on divine service, and, attention when you are there. The man, who wilfully absents himself from church, wrongs his own soul, for he throws himself perversely out of the way of correction or improvement, and, whatever sins he may through ignorance happen to commit, will *fall upon his own head* : for, instead of employing his talent, he conceals it in a napkin ; and therefore merits the blame, not only of *an unprofitable*, but of a *wicked servant*.

The work of conversion is not the work of a day ; nor are the truths of the Gospel, speculative as well as practical, such as can be learned without exertion or trouble. The *grace of God* is vouchsafed to *those that ask it* ; but the indolent, and those who wantonly reject it, *God will judge*. If it were even possible to attain knowledge without seeking it, if instinctively we were possessed of all the principles of morality ; still, the human mind is naturally prone to evil, it requires to be excited, to be quickened,
to

to be alarmed, to be put frequently on its guard against the approaches of the tempter. Ill habits gain upon us as it were insensibly, and we may be involved in a course of depravity before we are aware of the consequences, unless some friendly warning awake us from our dream of sin, and inform us of our danger. Whatever of refined morality the present age can boast may I think modestly be attributed to the institution of Christianity, which provides for the instruction of such as want leisure or diligence to obtain it by other means; such as are too busy or too poor to apply to books for information; and it is worthy of remark that vice prevails most in those characters, and in those classes of men, who most frequently absent themselves from public worship. The great, who affect to be above that plain mode of instruction, which our church proposes, are dissipated and debauched; the poor, whose miserable and unhappy situation perhaps often keeps them away, are dissolute, profane, and dishonest.

nest. In fine, GOD has made it a positive duty to attend upon his service; and, if there were no other reason, than that GOD has appointed it, that is motive sufficient with a rational being, who respects the ordinance of GOD, or the welfare of his own soul.

Next to him, who absents himself from the church, the man, who is inattentive to his duty while he is there, is most deserving of censure: and indeed I see but little difference in the nature of the offence. As drowsiness or inattention are the effects of an indolent habit, and may be overcome by a little exertion, it may reasonably be accounted sinful to persevere in them. I know that the blame is sometimes laid upon the preacher; and it must be confessed that one sermon may be better than another, the matter more useful, the manner more interesting. A preacher may, it is true, fall forth into the unfruitful wilds of speculative divinity, may involve his hearers in the clouds of mysticism. Yet, I will venture

ture to aver, that you will seldom hear a discourse, from which you may not, if you are well inclined, derive instruction. Indeed, the plainest discourses, those which are least admired, are often, I might say generally, more instructive than those which amuse the fancy and abound most in rhetorical embellishments. Besides, while you are indulging in sloth or negligence, it is impossible to say what you may lose. Some useful precept, which might have been conducive to the whole happiness of your future life; some seasonable intimation, which might rescue you from the jaws of destruction, may escape you. In one word, it is not the preacher you affront, but your GOD AND SAVIOUR, who requires that you *serve him with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.*

I said, drowziness and inattention are vices of habit, and by a little pains the habit may be reclaimed. Only exert yourselves for a little, and be properly on your guard against them. Fix your mind on the subject,

ject, and pursue it, as with a desire of committing it to memory, and attention will become easy in a short time.

Another practice, which I would recommend, is a mode of self-examination, by which every person may be easily enabled to judge of his progress in religious knowledge, and which consists in putting to himself a few plain questions as he returns from divine service: as, "What have I learned to-day? With what truths, formerly unexplored, have I made myself acquainted? Have I discovered any duty, in which I was deficient? Have the embers of any latent virtues been awakened within me? Or, is my heart warmed with the general love of God and religion?" If, indeed, you go not away impressed with some important sentiment, conclude that you have spent your time very unprofitably; and that service only, which brings improvement to yourself, is acceptable with God.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XIII.

ON PREPARATION FOR DEATH.*

LUKE VIII. 52.

She is not dead, but sleepeth.

THERE are certain subjects, from the near contemplation of which the human mind naturally shrinks back with horror and disgust: and of this kind is the melancholy, and often painful, termination of our existence. Indeed, in the bare idea of death, there are so many circumstances calculated to alarm our frail and imperfect natures, that we cannot wonder at the sentiment which it generally inspires. To be rudely torn from a world, with which we have scarcely formed an acquaintance;

* A funeral sermon, preached at St. Giles's, Cripple-gate, July 18, 1784. The text appointed by the friends of the deceased.

to be parted in a moment from all those splendid trifles, which have engrossed our attention; to stand the shock of an eternal separation from every loved connexion; to sink into nothing; to close our existence with languor and anxiety; with pain and agony: — 'Tis a fearful idea! and, if religion presented no further prospect to our view; *if in this life only we had hope, then were we of all creatures most miserable!*

As the mission of CHRIST, however, was in all respects a dispensation of mercy, that great attribute of the Deity appears super-eminent in this point: the first object of his teaching was to deliver man from that *King of Terrors*; and to bring life and immortality to light by his Gospel.

Though we cannot deny that the Pagan world was possessed of some obscure and indistinct opinions, which respected a life after this, they were founded on too slight a basis to be productive of any solid consolation. In the hours, when cheerfulness and hope presided, the ingenious fictions of Elysium,

Elysium, and the state of the dead, adorned by the luxuriancy of poetic fancy, might afford matter for speculation, or might fill agreeably the blanks of discourse. Nature might be investigated, or the attributes of the Divinity adduced, to lend a colour of argument to a flattering idea. But, the belief of a future state did not pierce their hearts, nor did the moral arguments in its favour entirely satisfy their understandings; and, in the hours of adversity, of solitude, and sorrow, we find the wisest of the heathen world benighted in scepticism, and repining in despair.

Though the partial revelation, which dimly enlightened the Jewish nation, strengthened, by the accession of some extraordinary facts, the feeble reasonings of unassisted Nature; yet the evidence, on the whole, was far from satisfactory; and, in consequence, we find, that, at the time of the manifestation of the Gospel, a considerable body of the most learned among the Jews denied that Moses had afforded

any information concerning a future state, and even positively affirmed, that *there is no resurrection of the dead.*

Such was the state of things, when CHRIST and his apostles appeared, announcing the *glad tidings of the kingdom of God*, and inculcating the doctrines of *repentance for the remission of sins, and everlasting life.* It appears, accordingly, that all the doctrines, all the discourses of our blessed LORD uniformly tended to the establishment of this important point. But, as he rightly considered, that Experience is the most powerful of all preceptors, he spoke no less forcibly to the senses than to the understanding; he held a picture to the eyes, and confirmed by actions what in words he had asserted.

The most striking of all his miracles; those indeed on which he seems to have laid the greatest stress; and to which he most confidently appeals, were those which tended to confirm the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Perhaps indeed there

was

was no effectual method of convincing mankind short of actually demonstrating the possibility of what he advanced, and evincing to them, by their own experience, that what was usually considered as the termination of existence is no other than the passage from one life to another, the sleep of the body, occasioned by the temporary separation of the soul. As there is the most perfect conformity between his actions and his words, he seems peculiarly studious of using such phraseology as might least countenance the vulgar prejudices. He generally treats the state of death only as a sleep. Thus, when the beloved Lazarus was dead, and even consigned to the dark regions of the tomb, he tells his disciples: *Our friend Lazarus SLEEPETH*; and, in the very extraordinary transaction, which is under our immediate consideration, he asserts, in defiance of the ridicule of the multitude: *the damsel is not dead, but SLEEPETH.*

The doctrine being once established by well-attested facts, and placed beyond the reach of doubt by his own resurrection, we are not to wonder that similar exertions of the divine power are no longer displayed. It can be of little importance to recal the departed spirit from its mansions of rest to linger out a few years longer in this poor terrestrial state of existence, since the longest life is but a point on the vast scale of eternity : since *the days of man are as grass ; since he flourishes only as a flower of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven.* The great object was to demonstrate the possibility of his doctrine ; and happily, by the very means of evincing it, he established his own veracity, in the proofs which he exhibited that he was in reality *a teacher sent from God.*

This then appears incontestibly the state in which the scheme of the Gospel-redemption and Gospel-revelation has placed the creature man. Death is no longer to be considered as the tremendous conclusion of
being :

being : it is a lying down to rest, a slumber from which we are to awake to an eternity of happiness or misery ; a hell of torment, or a heaven of glory. On this important circumstance depend all the other branches of the Gospel-system : hence the invincible obligation to piety and virtue, hence the beauty of holiness, and the acceptable sacrifice of repentance, of a *broken and a contrite heart*.

Subordinate to this great object, permit me to urge, from that part of Scripture which is at present under our consideration, one practical point, which is of the utmost consequence : and that is, the necessity of being always prepared for the dissolution of these *earthly tabernacles*. And, with this view, I shall beg leave to recal your attention to some of the circumstances of the narrative, just preceding the words, which form the basis of this discourse.

There came, says the evangelist, a ruler of the synagogue, and threw himself at the feet of Jesus. — His case was desperate ; his mode

of entreaty was therefore in the highest degree urgent as well as humble. *He had one only daughter*, one only prop for his declining years. "Alas!" says a pathetic writer, "where there are many children, one can more easily be parted with, for the surviving may perhaps supply the comforts of the dead; but, when every joy and hope must live or die in one, the loss admits of no consolation." The daughter of Jairus was young; and, at the very time the application was made to JESUS, *she lay a-dying*. A slight interruption impedes the operation of even this last expedient; and, before our LORD could reach the house, a fatal messenger arrives with the unwelcome, though not unexpected, intelligence: *thy daughter is dead, trouble not the master*.

The alarming circumstance in this affecting narrative, and the practical conclusion, to which it is my desire at present to direct your attention, (for, we have already considered the apparent design of the transaction,)

action,) is the absurdity of flattering ourselves with the continuance of health and life, whatever our circumstances or situation; since we are, at the very best, but *strangers and pilgrims, and have here no continuing habitation*.* Jairus was rich; he was the ruler of a synagogue: but, of how little efficacy is wealth or station to the attainment of happiness! The daughter of Jairus was an only daughter; the delight, the ornament of his declining years. Yet the distresses of a fond parent could not stop the inexorable decree, or persuade the slayer to stay his hand. The daughter of Jairus was young, and yet innocence is found an ineffectual defence, and youth itself unable to resist the assault of the universal Destroyer. “Decrepit Age,” says the pious writer, whom I have already quoted, “expects death, and frequently solicits it;” “but immature and tender Youth looks

* The lady, by whose decease this discourse was occasioned, died very suddenly, and in the bloom of life.

“fearfully

“ fearfully on the approach of the awful
“ messenger of GOD.”

You, my brethren, have doubtless, in the course of your experience, more than once beheld the gay, the prosperous, the beautiful, and the young, untimely arrested in their career of life, and torn from the embraces of their lamenting friends. So inefficacious are all earthly means of deferring this alarming sentence, that not virtue itself, which defends us from most of the calamities attendant on mortality, can shield us from this. The nicest caution, the utmost prudence, the universal love of our fellow-creatures cannot alter our nature in this respect, or insure us even a moment of enjoyment in the most affluent circumstances. If, my brethren, innocence of life, if purity of intention, if the most conciliating manners, if gentleness of disposition, affability of deportment, if the strict performance of every domestic duty ; if unafected piety, and the most exact attention to all the offices of devotion, could rescue
from

from the stroke of death, this congregation would not at this moment lament the loss of one of its brightest ornaments. If these, and other excellent qualities best known to those, who best knew the possessor of them, could detain on earth a beloved spirit; the disconsolate husband, and the dejected friend would not at this moment lament in vain. The fatal summons arrives, *as a thief in the night*. — To-day it is my lot, to-morrow yours. So delicate and complex is the frame of man, that, rather than be surprized at its impermanency, we have cause to wonder that so many instances are found of protracted existence. Every step we tread is upon precipices and quicksands: *the snares of death*, says the Psalmist, *encompass me about, and the pains of hell get hold upon me*.

Go to the house of mourning, gay and thoughtless sons and daughters of dissipation.—Behold the mournful confusion, the speechless sorrow. — Behold the pale image of mortality; and let your consciences speak
with

with an eloquence irresistible, and which the sight of death can alone inspire ! Behold this, and tell me, what is there to attach you longer to sin and to the world ? What shall separate you longer from the only object that deserves your attention ? I trust, with the apostle, *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.*

The life of man, considered in its most extensive view, is but a short preparation for that which is to endure for ever. “ In “ a certain part of the world,” says an ancient writer, “ there are creatures produced, which live but a single day. Of “ these, therefore, that which dies at the “ eighth hour, dies well advanced in life ; “ that which dies at sun-set, dies in hoary “ old age ; and that which endures till “ midnight, may be accounted a prodigy. “ — Compare our longest life with eternity ;

“ nity; what great advantage can we boast
“ over these little insects? since our ex-
“ istence, in such a comparison, is not
“ that of a single day.” Let the confide-
ration repress our pride; let it increase our
vigilance. You who have the fairest pro-
bability on your side, consider that you ex-
ist in the midst of dangers, of accidents,
and diseases; you in middle life must, ac-
cording to the order of nature, confine
your views to a very moderate period; and
you, who totter on the brink of *the pit*,
how long can you expect to linger yet?—A
month? a year? Two or three at the
most? The sleep of sin is more fatal than
the sleep of death.—In the words of inspi-
ration, therefore: *Awake thou that sleepest,*
and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give
thee light!

If, my brethren, virtue cannot rescue
from the universal sentence of temporal
death; the promises of the Gospel assure
us of its power to remove from us the dan-
gers of eternal death. In the house of
mourning,

mourning, in the ears of the disconsolate parent, the Redeemer of mankind pronounced this memorable sentence: *she is not dead; but sleepeth.* Let us not suppose the intent of the words confined to a particular occasion. Let us not suppose, though an immediate miracle does not ensue, that the redemption of CHRIST and the operation of his power are less efficacious than during his abode on earth. The whole compass of endless time is but a point in the infinite comprehension of GOD; and if, at the call of our REDEEMER, we do not arise to a further enjoyment of this world; at his call we shall yet arise (if deserving of it) to the enjoyment of a better.

Possessed of this truth, we are perhaps possessed of more than a whole system of morality; since I can hardly conceive it possible for any reflecting being ever to be deliberately wicked, if he could be so provident as always to have death and judgement in his mind. There is, my brethren, one only effectual method of avoiding the fear
of

of death; and that is, preparing for it as we ought; there is one only mode of preparation, and that is, a holy and religious life. Supported by the *testimony of conscience*, the real Christian meets the King of Terrors with calmness and complacency. While the mortal frame is tortured in every fibre, the blessed confidence of enjoyment in another world relieves effectually the sufferings of this. While the tear of affection trembles in the eye for those beloved objects which are left behind, a firm hope and reliance on the mercy and good providence of GOD disperses every gloomy apprehension, and raises the soul to an anticipation of that bliss, which it is going to enjoy. This is indeed, not to die; this is not to experience what the captive tyrant called *the bitterness of death*. This is only *to sleep*, to repose in the *bosom of the Lord Jesus*; to lie down to rest, and to awake to glory. This is what disarrays death of all its terrors, makes it an object of emulation to the good, of envy to the wicked. This it was that
dictated

dictated the assertion of the Psalmist: *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*; and induced Balaam to exclaim: *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*

SERMON

S E R M O N XIV.

ON EDUCATION.*

EXODUS XX. 15.

Thou shalt not steal.

IT will scarcely admit of a dispute, that interest and duty equally constrain us to desire the promotion of virtue: interest, because in the virtue of individuals the commonwealth will find its best security, and we may enjoy our lives and properties more exempt from the danger and apprehension of molestation; duty, because it is the absolute command of ALMIGHTY GOD,

* Preached at St. Luke's, Middlesex, in June, 1783; for the benefit of the charity-school.

Should any resemblance be found between some parts of this sermon, and Dr. Parr's admirable Discourse on Education, published in 1785, the reader will see, by the date, that no charge of plagiarism can be admitted; the sermon being now printed almost verbatim as it was preached.

not to be weary in doing good. The exercise of mercy and benevolence is one of the first precepts of our religion; and in this instance it is attended with a particular promise of future recompence: *He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save his own soul.*

The alarming increase of those crimes, which interrupt the good order of society, calls for every exertion of the human faculties to restrain the progress of vice and depravity. This discourse will, therefore, not consist of a disquisition concerning the nature of the vice which is prohibited in the words of my text, but rather of an inquiry into the means of preventing it. In this I do not apprehend that I shall deviate very greatly from the scope and spirit of the commandment; since I am of opinion that it not only includes an injunction to abstain from every act of dishonesty ourselves, but also to exert our utmost endeavours to prevent it in others.

Some

Some of the most enlightened philosophers and legislators, who have treated of this subject, have recommended, above all human means, a sedulous attention to the education of youth : among these I shall only mention Solomon : *when wisdom, says that first of moralists, entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee : and again, train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* It will not, therefore, I presume, be thought unseasonable to inquire a little into the power of instruction and cultivation in controuling the vicious propensities of human nature, in reforming the heart, and reducing it to habits of decency, order, and industry. This will serve also to confine our investigation within reasonable limits ; and will prevent that confusion, which generally results from crowding a variety of objects within the boundaries of a short discourse.

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The superiority of the Scripture-history over those fantastical theories, which assert the innocence and virtue of human-nature, in what they are pleased to term its natural or undepraved state, a very slight acquaintance with the manners of uncivilized countries will sufficiently demonstrate. That happiness and virtue, which has been the theme of so much declamation, is found to exist only in the splendid visions of fancy and romance. Man in a savage state is the most malignant perhaps of the whole animal creation, and exhibits only the melancholy ruins of an exalted nature, the undoubted vestiges of his fall and corruption. Not a sentiment of virtue, not one generous emotion, but is the effect of instruction and art: the care of Providence must accompany us through every stage of our existence; and knowledge, which is derived from God, must complete the happiness of the creature he has formed.

If we trace the naked and unsocial savage rising by just gradations to all the arts of life,

life, we shall find knowledge, and chiefly religious knowledge, the conducting star, that guides to order and felicity. View him in the first rude stage of existence, without security and without comfort, exposed to all the inclemencies of elements, in a state of war with every other creature, and particularly with his own species; snatching, as occasion offers, an uncertain subsistence; without shelter in the winter, without support in his sickness; yielding up his breath like the beasts of the field, or perhaps, in the extremity of his weakness, the living prey of some more ferocious animal. Observe next, a ray of the divine wisdom enlightening him in this benighted state, and directing him to seek in society a partial remedy for that curse, to which he was subjected, and the earth itself was subjected for his sake. Observe the benevolent affections in their first commencement; the domestic, and the filial engagements insensibly leading to that universal love, which is to be the basis of his happiness. Yet his

faculties and his affections are bounded still, and the malignity of his nature disturbs that repose, which, in such a state of life, might perhaps be admitted as a substitute for enjoyment. Tribe plunders tribe, and the momentary possession is the object of envy and of rapine. The first exertions of the rational faculties are seen in cunning and in fraud. Societies are destroyed by general contentions; private happiness is interrupted by undue exertions of superior force. Here again the voice of GOD interposes, and traces out the limits of human desires. A happy distinction of property takes place: and among the first commands, issued with all the solemnity of thunders, lightning, and a thick cloud, that overshadowed the mount of GOD, was this: *thou shalt not steal.*

It is, I think, no inconsiderable proof in favour of the utility of knowledge, that the Christian dispensation was offered to man in one of the most enlightened periods of society, when the traditions of the first
ages,

ages, the partial revelations of the divine will, had served as the basis of that structure of wisdom and policy, which was raised by the united exertions of the most enlarged understandings among the human race. To this we may add, that the Christian revelation is calculated for man in society, the more informed our minds, the fitter we are to profit from its precepts, and to reduce them to practice ; and that the sublimity of its doctrines, and the purity of its discipline, presuppose the arts of life to have made no inconsiderable progress.

But it will perhaps be more to our purpose to descend from generals to particulars ; from historical illustration to the direct application of the subject to the circumstances of the present times. Let us, therefore, pursuing the plan of reasoning glanced at in the exordium of this discourse, and which indeed the nature of the subject itself points out, proceed to inquire how far it is our INTEREST as well as

our DUTY to provide for the good education of the poor.

First. By the instruction of youth, and particularly by that useful mode of instruction pursued in the charity-schools of this kingdom, you furnish them with proper employment; and, by placing them in some active sphere of life, you relieve them from the temptation of *stealing* for the sake of subsistence. There are only two causes which can plunge a thinking being into that state of despair, which engages him to bid defiance to the laws of his country: and these are, an excessive and habitual attachment to vice and dissipation; or actually the want of honourable means of placing himself above necessity.

However, therefore, the position, "that Learning is the handmaid of Virtue," may be disputed; no sober person will assert, that to instruct young persons in reading, writing, and in some useful occupation, is not of service to the community; since it is a self-evident proposition, that this must
be

be a most probable method of weakening at least both of the motives to dishonesty, which I have pointed out. So far then you are serving society, by preventing those, in whose favour I address you, from becoming guilty of crimes. But, who can say how much positive good you may be doing in other respects? Who can say to what degree of excellence one of the least of these may hereafter arrive? Instead of outlaws and assassins, these objects of your humanity may hereafter be enrolled among the benefactors of mankind. That happy union of genius and industry, which achieves great actions, is chiefly found among those who have passed their early years in the struggles of adversity. Little as we suspect it, we have perhaps before us a group, in which the all-seeing eye of Providence may discern the ingenious mechanic; the elegant artist; the intelligent merchant; the invincible soldier; the staff of our political existence, the generous, the enterprising seaman. These will spend
their

their lives in your service, they will defend you abroad, they will improve and enrich you at home. Education is the only mean, whereby you can give scope to genius. The inventors of arts, the refiners of manners, the improvers of science, are called forth only by cultivation and care.

But, secondly, By educating the poor, you not only put them in the way of being useful, and remove them from the temptation of being vicious; but you fortify their minds with sound and salutary principles. The necessity of a religious education to the welfare of mankind has seldom been questioned. An author,* indeed, by no means favourable in general to the interests of religion, is compelled to confess, that the prevalence of the Epicurean philosophy was one of the causes, which contributed to the very rapid decline of the Roman greatness: if on no other account, by lessening religious awe, and the sanctity

* Montesquieu.

of oaths. For these reasons, self-interest recommends a proper attention to the education of the poor; and the position is supported by a series of incontrovertible facts: most of the unhappy persons, whose lives are forfeited for depredations committed on society, are persons without education.

I observed, that DUTY coincided with interest in enforcing the exercise of benevolence on this occasion. The principles of humanity and the precepts of religion dictate to us *to do good unto all men; to love mercy; and to administer to all the necessities of our fellow-creatures, spiritual as well as temporal.* It remains, therefore, to demonstrate, how far you fulfil these injunctions in withholding youth from ignorance and vice. Suffer your imaginations to accompany me for a moment to the obscure retreat of poverty and wretchedness. Behold the child of penury commence his career under inauspicious omens! Behold him an infant beggar, whose occupation
bids

bids defiance to diffidence and shame, the proper guardians and ornaments of youth. Behold him made callous by the scoffs and inhumanity of the multitude; and happy to find a protector in any abandoned villain who stands forth in his defence. Behold him exposed to the seductions of bad company, and the temptations of want. Early initiated in all the habits of profaneness and licentiousness, without even the knowledge of his GOD to prevent or to restrain him, what virtue, what sense of decency can be expected from him? He begins to be a thief, before he has ceased to be a child. Green in years, he is matured in wickedness. A monster of depravity and brutishness; humanity and religion are extinct, or rather never had a place in his heart. Behold the unavailing anxiety of his miserable parents; behold him *bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.* The following scene will exhibit him confirmed in the practice of every crime, at which human nature revolts.—He is a common

mon plunderer and assassin. He violates no rule of justice, for he never was acquainted with any. He has no sentiments of compassion; compassion he never met with, compassion he never felt: and he falls a victim to laws, which he had never considered, of which indeed he had perhaps scarcely any knowledge or apprehension. If we contemplate the unhappy female, nurtured in similar circumstances, the *pathos* is the same, with the additional horrors of prostitution, disease, seduction of others, and every curse, which beauty, unprotected by principle, can bring upon the possessor and the world.

Such are the arguments, my brethren, which interest and duty offer to your consideration; arguments unanswerable in my opinion, and only to be resisted by those, who are exempted from all the common feelings incidental to human nature.

In the course of this address, I have not, I believe, deviated very far from the important command, which was the basis of this discourse.

discourse. If I have reserved the close and final application of the text till now; for you it is reserved, who are the objects of this institution. *Thou shalt not steal* is a precept, that came directly from GOD, and was confirmed by the mouth of your REDEEMER. — *Thou shalt not steal*: — I trust there is not one among you, but trembles at the thought! But, while I hold you incapable of the crime, which is forbidden in my text, I must not forget to caution you against those vices which seem to lead to the most enormous, and are more dangerous, because more generally practised. Lying is next to stealing, both in its nature and consequences. Liars and thieves are equally hateful to GOD, and we are assured neither *shall enter into the kingdom of heaven*. Profane swearing is an useless and a dangerous vice, and has commonly the same tendency. Bad company is always connected with swearing, with lying, and frequently with stealing likewise. Beware therefore of idle, dissolute, profane companions! How-
ever

ever enticing, however agreeable, I intreat you to avoid them. If you respect this advice as you ought, you will find the benefit of it every moment of your life, and in your old age you will recollect it with gratitude and with pleasure. There need nothing be said, I trust, to excite your thankfulness to your benefactors; the best proof you can exhibit of it will be obedience and mild submission to their good intentions, and to those persons whom they have set over you for your good.

My brethren, reason, self-interest, and moral duty, suggested so many arguments upon the subject, that I have almost omitted to treat it as an object of religion. But I cannot think of dismissing you without a few words in a religious view.

It is not only to be obedient to the laws of GOD in your own persons, and to promote them in your own families, that *you are called*; you are *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood*, whose peculiar office and province it is to assert and enforce them in
the

the face of the world. *Thou seeest a thief and consentest unto him, and art partaker with the adulterers,* is the censure that will inevitably await you, if you do not now exert yourselves for the prevention of those crimes. However powerfully humanity may plead, the plea of religion is infinitely more powerful. Humanity tells you, that you rescue a fellow-creature from ignorance, from idleness, from infamy, from wretchedness; Religion tells you, that you are an instrument in the hands of Providence to rescue him from sin, from Satan, from the wrath of GOD, and from a state of reprobation. Humanity tells you, that you make these poor creatures happy by wisdom, and knowledge, and useful employment; Religion tells you, that you introduce them to that which is above all knowledge, the knowledge of GOD himself. Not only the dictates of humanity, but those of self-interest acquire a peculiar force when united with religious motives. Self-interest suggests, that you are benefiting society, and consequently

quently yourself, by the cultivation of arts, commerce and industry; that you are protecting your person and property from violence and assault, by employing and educating those, who would otherwise have neither subsistence nor principle: but Religion tells you, that you are engaged in the same work with CHRIST and his apostles; and that, in providing for the spiritual necessities of others, you are caring for your own.

R S E R M O N

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the matter of the proposed amendment to the constitution of the State of New York, and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration.

SERMON XV.

ON CONSCIENCE.*

MATT. XIV. 1 & 2.

At that time, Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, this is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead.

THAT evil should be productive of good, that Pain and Adversity should be the handmaids of Virtue, displays the wisdom as well as the mercy of our CREATOR, who has submitted us to this varied state. — Or rather, this dispensation serves to diminish the weight of that curse, which the disobedience of the first man had entailed upon posterity.

* Preached at the Magdalen Chapel, August, 1784.

Of all the train of moral (I might perhaps add natural) evils, there is none more intolerable, and yet none more salutary, than the pain of conscience. It is the most intolerable, because the sensation of terror is generally added to that of remorse; and that, not a transient terror, excited by the apprehension of a temporary affliction, but a constant terror founded on the too certain knowledge and expectation of a punishment which is to endure for ever.—But the disease, if seasonably attended to, points immediately to its remedy. That remorse, which brings to our recollection ideas fraught with anxiety and dread, points to us the means of happiness and comfort. The commencement of virtue in the heart of a sinner is remorse; repentance follows as its natural successor.—Repentance teaches us to hope in the promises of God,—and by hope we are saved.

If, on the other hand, we are inattentive to the admonitions of conscience, and think by other means to escape the persecution;

let

let us remember that from the reproaches of conscience and the terrors of futurity no station is secure. — Conscience, like death, assails the monarch as well as the peasant. No life so busy, but the sinner will find occasions to recollect his guilt and his danger; no life so retired as to enable the victim of despair to fly from himself.

In proof of this observation, you have before you, my brethren, the vain, the sensual, the ambitious Herod. You have a fatal example, that happiness is not necessarily connected with rank or fortune; — that our vices only are our real tormentors; and that prosperity is commonly no more than the specious betrayer of human life.

In all the luxury of an Eastern court, when the conscience should seem to be charmed to rest by the most exquisite enjoyments, or diverted by the variety of pleasure, — Herod is wretched. Seated on an hereditary throne, a statesman and a conqueror, — Herod trembles. An obscure individual, who had only signalized himself

by works of mercy and benevolence, disturbs the conscience of a king. — But the guilt of murder sat heavily on his heart. — Murder was the poison that rankled in his wounded soul. *When Herod heard of the fame of Jesus, he said, this is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead.* The solution was forced, the apprehension was contrary to nature and reason. — To rise from the dead was a miracle of a far more stupendous nature than any which Jesus had hitherto performed. Elijah and the prophets had all wrought miracles; and was it not easier to suppose, that another had succeeded, endued with similar powers, than that a deaf or blind man could not be cured, or a cripple restored to the use of his limbs, without one rising from the dead? and yet Herod exclaims: — *This is John the Baptist, — he is risen from the dead.* But Herod was the murderer of John the Baptist; — with John the Baptist, therefore, every thought was associated. The bloody spectre of the mangled prophet accompanied him in every action.

action. — By John the Baptist his slumbers were interrupted, by John the Baptist his appetite was palled even before he had tasted of the banquet. Every stranger that appeared was John the Baptist; every rumour that was propagated had some relation to this hideous phantom, which incessantly haunted his imagination. Dreadful, comfortless, distracting state! Society is a terror; solitude is hell! Every cloak may conceal a traitor. The impatient dagger may tremble in the hand of the enthusiastic disciple; and Herod *fears the multitude, because they counted John for a prophet*. Go, then, most wretched of tyrants, to thy secure and secret closet. Fortify the entrance against the intruding rabble. Thy state, alas! requires that thou shouldst be secured from thyself. Thy enemy, thy persecutor is thyself. The murdered John, behold he haunts thee still! He points to a vengeance far more ample, more severe. The multitude! What can the multitude? They may rebel against thee, they may dis-

turb thy government, they may reject its authority. But GOD? he can cast thee down into the abyfs of hell, and torment thee everlaftingly.

Obferve, my brethren, by what infenfible gradations the heart is vitiated and depraved. Obferve the neceffity of attending in time to the admonitions of confcience. Herod begins with LUST, he ends with MURDER. Born to a throne, with an example of cruelty in the perfon of his father, (the detefted author of the mafacre at Bethlehem,) the heedlefs monarch places his only happinefs in the indulgence of his paffions. We may imagine many progressive fteps before his heart arrived at that callous period, when it was no longer to be fatisfied with a vulgar crime. His brother's wife is the object of his impure defires; and yet, while he was ftill young in vice, *he heard John gladly*. Such is the eloquence of virtue, that even bad men will take pleafure in its praifes, while their own foibles and extravagances are not the immediate

mediate objects of censure. But, the preacher of repentance could not tacitly behold an act, which put justice and even decency to the blush. He boldly taxes the tyrant with his crime, and tells him, however lovely and inviting the person of Herodias might be, *It is not lawful for thee to have her.* The conscience of Herod rebuked him more severely than the expostulation of the prophet; and, by a mistaken effort to silence this importunate monitor, John is cast into prison. The resource, however, is as ineffectual as the action is unjust; while John lives, there is a witness and a censor of his infamy. Herodias has a conscience too; and, to relieve her from its reproaches, it is rashly and impiously concluded that John must die. The man, who has resigned the reins to passion, who has devoted himself to the gratification of his vicious and impure desires, is no longer under the awe of God, or the dominion of conscience. Respect to the laws, shame of the world, regard to his

his fortune, care of his family, friends, reputation, body and soul, are sacrificed. The prophet falls a victim to the rage and folly of a licentious woman: the base and unmanly Herod is made eternally wretched.

Taught by this example, you who dwell in the tents of Tranquillity, whose blooming and cheerful companion is Innocence, learn to prize that blessing as it deserves. The abandoned sinner, who wishes to render you as wretched as himself, will tell you, you want to know the world.—— But in what would he instruct you? In misery, in folly; in what to be ignorant of, is the best of knowledge.—— Beware of the first advance in sin. It may seem perhaps but a trifling deviation; but whither it may lead you is impossible to guess. No human being ever became abandoned at once; and petty omissions usually lead to universal depravity. It is a question, whether, innocence once lost, the mind's tranquillity is ever totally restored. The converted sinner experiences

experiences indeed a sensation of happiness; but it is the "Joy of grief;" it is a pensive pleasure, mingled with regret. Perfect innocence is the great constituent of perfect felicity. The celestial spirits are happier than we are, because they are better; and God is all in all, happiness supreme, because he is infinite in goodness. You have a monitor, that will not permit you to go astray uninformed of your danger. Conscience is not only a judge, but an adviser; as such, respect her dictates, and, as you value your own happiness in this life and that which is to come, never, never wantonly disregard her.

You, who have indeed deviated into the paths of error, but have not as yet totally bewildered yourself in the mazes of depravity: you, who have experienced, and now perhaps experience the severe reproaches of an outraged conscience: consider them as the voice of God, as a divine grace operating within you for the redemption of your soul. Your remorse is not

not the agony of a Herod, or the trembling of a Felix; it is the humiliation of David, it is the tear of Peter. Go, then, like that holy apostle, and weep for your weakness; but, let your repentance not finish there. As you dread the renewal of your crime, destroy completely all the means of temptation. Here, in the awful presence of your GOD and SAVIOUR, make a solemn offering of every darling object, that may again endanger your peace and your salvation. Resolve, with a holy ardour, most carefully to avoid those dangerous connexions, those profligate companions, whose art, whose gaiety, whose alluring conversation, may betray you a second time to infamy and ruin.

You, last of all, if any such be present, who are a veteran in sin, — tell me, have you found nothing to alarm you in the picture that has been exhibited? Perhaps the voice of conscience may be weak within you; extinguished I cannot suppose it, for Herod had a conscience, and that too in almost

most the ultimate stage of depravity. If, therefore, a spark of virtue yet remain ; if a ray of goodness can yet be found to enlighten you ; — retract in time. Consider to what the warnings of conscience in general relate. Consider that her prophetic voice forebodes not evil in this life alone, but in another. Consider that, if even now your conscience be lulled into the sleep of sensuality and sin, it will awake to misery at one time or other ; at a time, perhaps, when to hope for a remedy were absurd and impossible. Let not a fatal suggestion of your spiritual enemy, a sad suspicion that your case is too desperate for amendment, mislead you. Whatever your difficulties, spiritual and temporal, GOD will not desert you, if you truly turn to him. Through faith in CHRIST, and obedience to his commandments, a glorious prospect yet opens to your view. *Though thy sins be as scarlet, says the prophet, they shall be white as snow ; and, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* Thy
sorrow,

forrow, thy contrition shall not pass unrewarded. Thou, *the lost sheep*, shalt cause rejoicing even in heaven.

And you, my young friends: gaiety, perhaps, or the hopes of entertainment, may have invited some of you to the most edifying of spectacles. Come, then, and in the house of penitence learn the necessity of attending sedulously to the lessons of conscience. Let these unhappy sinners tell their tale of woe. Let them tell you what remorse, what apprehensions they experienced on their first fatal dereliction of virtue. Let them describe the painful conflicts between modesty and hunger, between honour and poverty, when reduced to the shameful necessity of general prostitution. Let them tell you how they wandered desolate and friendless, and wanted perhaps a morsel of bread to satisfy the cravings of nature; how they passed the wintry night exposed to all the rigour of the elements; nor even in the *tents of wickedness* could find a shelter, or *where to lay their heads*.

beads. Let them tell you the variety of anguish they have experienced; the brutal treatment, the insolent and inhuman injuries, to which they have submitted; the disease, the penury they have endured; the atrocious and desperate crimes in which they have been induced to take a part. While your hearts yet melt with the affecting detail: behold the miserable wreck of beauty and of health; behold the delicacy of youth untimely sinking under the infirmities of age!

After this, I cannot think it necessary to persuade you liberally to support an institution, which has for its object the rescuing of a fellow-creature from such accumulated affliction; which has for its object the saving of so many lives that may be useful to the community; which has for its object the reformation of manners and the prevention of vice; which has for its object the reconciling to GOD so many souls estranged from their REDEEMER, and existing in the *gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.* — It is a shocking

shocking case, when the unhappy victim of imprudence is involved in sin, without a possibility of escape; it is a shocking case, when hunger and cold, poverty and disgrace force the reluctant penitent to a continuance in sin, and when the necessities of the body impel (as it were) to the ruin of the soul. Let the voice of conscience, my brethren, be the voice of charity. As you are not without sin yourselves, learn to have pity on your fellow-criminals. And, in particular, if any sinner be present, who is so wretched as to have been accessory to the entailing on a deluded female the miseries of prostitution, let the voice of conscience now tell him, that his crime is no common crime; and that, if he bestowed, at this moment, on this excellent institution, not *the half*, (like the virtuous publican,) but the *whole of his goods*, he would then scarcely expiate the blackness of his guilt. It is to be lamented that the prejudices or the selfishness of mankind have not afforded to this charity that support, to which,

which, in the eye of reason, it is justly entitled. Let not the voice of illiberality tell us, that without this house of mercy there are other means of relief. It is not in the indiscriminate mass of a common work-house, that the heart is to be converted, the understanding to be enlightened, and habits of profligacy to be changed into habits of order and devotion : such objects as these might indeed contribute to the general depravity and corruption of the place, but they could neither be reformed there themselves, nor would they be out of the way of perverting others. Let it not be said, again, that the good intentions of the charity are not always answered. Perhaps not : (and yet I can scarcely imagine that a reflecting being, who has experienced the miseries of a life of prostitution, should willingly return to them.) But, allowing the possibility of this : if but a few are saved, or if (as I am inclined to believe) the majority are restored to religion, to industry, to their disconsolate parents, the

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foundest

foundest head and the purest heart must certainly approve your bounty. Let your generosity, my brethren, make some compensation for the obduracy of others ; and, for this exertion of benevolence, be assured that *the blessing of her, who was ready to perish, will come down upon you ; and that he, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, will reward you seven-fold into your own bosoms.*

SERMON

S E R M O N XVI.

ON TOLERATION.*

LUKE IX. 55, 56.

*Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.
For, the Son of Man is not come to destroy
men's lives, but to save them.*

WHEN the SUPREME AUTHOR OF NATURE created mankind dependent upon each other, it was a sufficient intimation of his divine will: *that, as he loved us, so should we also love one another.* Subject as we are to innumerable wants and infirmities; and exposed as we are to various dangers and calamities, the strong and prevailing voice of self-interest solicits us to

* The following discourse was preached at St. Nicholas, Liverpool, June 11, 1780, during the dreadful riots in the metropolis; at a time when there was great reason to apprehend the same tragedy would be acted in that place.

the constant exertion of the benevolent affections. In the weak and tender state of infancy, to these we are indebted for nurture and support; and, in maturer age, it is from these alone that we are to look for satisfaction and comfort. Without these, this *garden of Eden*, which the LORD has appointed us *to dress and to keep*, would become a dreary and disconsolate waste; the thorns of disappointment would overspread every pleasant spot, nor would it afford one gay flower, one fragrant and luxuriant shrub, to cheer and entertain the passenger in his melancholy way.

“ But, has the voice of Nature told me to regard with kind affection the malignant being who loves not me; or to embrace the ruffian, whose hand is raised to shed my blood? Does Nature impel me to love the man, whose religious opinions have set him at variance with the rest of his species; who dishonours GOD who is the supreme object of my adoration, and despises the laws, which I account both sacred and divine? ”

THAT
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GOD, let us remember, *causes his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust*; THAT GOD has declared, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*; THAT GOD is long-suffering, *slow to anger and of great kindness*. Who made thee a judge of the supreme decrees? Does GOD himself endure, and canst not thou? Mistake not thy perverse passions for the dictates of virtue, or the breathings of a devout and holy spirit. Shall he, that all-merciful and beneficent Master, *forgive us ten thousand talents*, and shall not we *forgive our fellow-servant one hundred pence*? Shall we receive good things at the hand of GOD; and shall we envy our brethren the peaceable possession of the same? Shall we wrest judgement out of the hands of Providence, and that on the most impious of all pretences, that of being the sole interpreters of his almighty will, the sole enlightened, the sole capable of instructing and reforming mankind?

I know of but one argument from Scripture, which appears to afford the lightest

colour or pretence for religious persecution; I mean that which is derived from the extirpation of the idolatrous nations by Moses and Joshua, and the first leaders of the children of Israel. Let us not forget, however, that the interposition of GOD in favour of the Israelites was in every respect of a miraculous kind, and cannot possibly parallel with any thing in the present circumstances of society. Let us therefore at least have the modesty to wait for a particular injunction from above, before we presume to wield the thunders of JEHOVAH; before we assume the high office of ministers of almighty vengeance, and exalt ourselves into judges of our fellow-creatures.

But, though it were evident, upon the clearest principles, that the extirpation of unbelievers was not a particular, but a general appointment under the dispensation of Moses; we are certain that, under that of the Gospel, nothing can be more repugnant to the order and design of Providence. CHRIST himself has positively assured us, that

that he *came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them*: he has forbidden his disciples to use violence even in their own defence: and, though he remarks, that he *came not to send peace on earth, but a sword*, it is evident that he refers to those persecutions, which should be raised, not by his disciples, but against them. The whole life of our blessed LORD was indeed one continued act of mercy, of patience, and of unwearied benevolence. He was *meek and lowly of heart*; he was ever ready to convince and reprove, but never to persecute. On the contrary, rejected with indignity, and not permitted even to enter a village that lay directly in his way, he is importuned by the intemperate zeal of his disciples, after the example of Elias, to call down fire from heaven to consume the rebellious despisers of his mission. — But, what was his reply? *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For, the Son of man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*

To descend to particulars on this occasion would be an endless task. The Messiah is emphatically styled *the Prince of peace*. We are repeatedly exhorted to *love as brethren: for he, who loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?* We are to *follow peace with all men, and above all to have fervent charity one with another*. Not a *charity* which supposes the end to justify the means; not a *charity* which burns the body to save the soul; not a *charity* which damns yourself under the pretence of effecting the salvation of another: but a *charity not easily provoked, which thinketh no evil, beareth all things, hopeth all things, believeth all things, and in honour preferring one another*. Even when personally offended, when provoked by the most outrageous insults that human malignancy can invent, the same authority enjoins us to receive it, as the visitation of God, with sufferance and tranquillity. Revenge is indeed a passion false in its principles, and the associate only of little, uncultivated minds.

minds. To feel for our fellow-creatures is the great and distinguishing, the most honourable characteristic of man's nature; and, why we should not pity them for one infirmity, as well as another, I see no just reason that can be assigned. *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!* was the compassionate prayer of the most benevolent, the most patient, and yet the most dignified of characters: and, if we also considered, that frequently, when men are guilty of actual errors and offences, *they know not what they do*, we should rather endeavour to convince them by reason than to irritate them by violence.

To *forgive our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to pray for them that despitefully use us*, is a refinement in morals unknown to the heathen world; and yet experience teaches us, that it is not a refinement above human power, since it has been exemplified not only in our LORD himself, but in his immediate disciples; — most of them, at their last hour, recommending to
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the mercy of GOD their inhuman murderers, and fervently exclaiming, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*

If such, therefore, be the spirit of Christianity, I think I need not be apprehensive of censure, when I pronounce, that no power, no pretence whatever, can authorize persecution; and indeed I have but little doubt that it will be found not less absurd than unjust. To think freely is the universal privilege of human nature. That noble principle, the soul, is endued with such a portion of liberty, that the most potent of tyrants is unable to hold it in fetters. You may make a man a hypocrite and a liar, but you cannot by force make him a real convert. Love, charity, good actions, good examples, are the means to win the hearts of men. I have heard of false religions propagated by violence, but never yet knew that the case with the true one. The religion of CHRIST, by its native excellence, and by the assistance of Providence alone, made its way in the face
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of every earthly impediment. Our glorious reformation, against all the power and efforts of the church of Rome, forced conviction on the minds of men, and had made considerable progress before it derived the smallest assistance from any civil power whatever. It is indeed the nature of truth to be ever victorious in the end. Sophistry or superstition may endure for a day; but, like the insects of summer, no sooner is the warm beam of temporal power withdrawn, than they die away of themselves, and *their memory is forgotten.*

If ever coolness and temperance be required, it is in religious controversy. If we be so easily misled by passion, and if the object be of so great importance, how much does it behove us to guard with the utmost vigilance our hearts? Enthusiasm is a flame soon lighted, but not easily extinguished. It confuses the judgement, it is almost certain to betray us into error. The worst is, it is a madness of which men are not always conscious; but there is one symptom,

symptom, which is infallible, and that is want of charity. Whoever experiences this, in the slightest degree, has great occasion to be apprehensive of the consequences; and, depend upon it, if this fever of the mind be not repelled in time, a delirium is not far remote. We may call our fury zeal, we may brand the contrary temper with the name of lukewarmness; but, be not deceived; where there is no charity, there is no Christianity.

Till almighty wisdom shall otherwise dispose the affairs of this world, I fear there is as little probability that men should become uniform in their religious sentiments as that they should all speak the same language. But, if we differ not in essentials, if only some doctrine obscure in itself, and likely to remain so, if some petty ceremony, some unavailing rite, be the ground of dissent; how unbecoming, how absurd to carry with us our religious opinions upon every occasion, as weapons with which to assault each other? Let us rather address
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the Deity *each in his own language*, nor any one officiously intrude upon the well-meant piety of his neighbour. I say *well-meant*, because, though there may be hypocrites in every church, the better part (in number, as well as in principle) really mean to serve God, and do it in the best manner they are capable.

But supposing, after all, that the difference is not in forms, but in essentials; supposing our brethren in the wrong, which is the way to reclaim them? By arms or by arguments? Ignorance in fact is generally the true parent of persecution. Men will seldom be at the pains to inform themselves of the principles of religion, and, when they have adopted a set of opinions, without at all investigating their nature or harmony, they persuade themselves it is their duty to force them on the rest of mankind: so much easier is it to wield the weapons of violence than those of truth and reason. You cannot possibly, however, awe men into belief; by cruelty and
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rancour you will rather confirm their prejudices, for they are naturally attached to those things that cost them dearest. Again, suppose the false religion, which you attack in this manner, equally or more powerful in another part of the world, with how much greater advantage will she employ those weapons against the truth, which you have condescended to make use of in its favour? Is this religion intolerant, of a savage and persecuting spirit? — In what do you differ from those who profess it, if you adopt its maxims? You may call yourself by what name you please, but you are of the same religion if you act upon the same principles.

We see, then, the nature and necessity of Charity. She is the handmaid of philosophy and right reason, and essential to both; she is the offspring of true religion, and inseparable from it. This discourse, my brethren, is not meant to make you less zealous members of that *form of sound doctrine* which you profess: its design is to
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make you real members of the communion of our English church, firm but moderate, charitable though sincere.

A zeal for the interests of piety and virtue in general, is very different from the ZEAL OF PARTY. Too much of a certain species of liberality, or rather of indifference for religion, seems at present to pervade all, and particularly the superior ranks of society; but, such is the perverseness of human nature, that even this indifference has not been able to eradicate those malevolent prejudices which have been the blemish of better times. If any of you ~~recollect~~ to the neglect of your religion; if any of you feel a noble emulation to distinguish yourselves in the service of your GOD, recollect, that there is a glorious field, in which your virtues may freely expatiate. Vice, profligacy, and dissipation, are more dangerous, more inveterate enemies to your GOD and SAVIOUR, than all the united powers of Popery, of Mahometanism, of Atheism itself. There is one mode

mode in which you may safely, and in my opinion most successfully, oppose the enemies of your faith; and that is, by shewing your zeal in your adherence to the precepts and the principles of your religion, by shewing yourselves better men, better citizens, better Christians, than those whom you oppose; these were the spiritual weapons with which CHRIST and his apostles fought and overcame; this is a warfare the effects of which will be permanent and certain; which, while it essentially serves the cause you are engaged in, will still more effectually serve yourselves. Here there is no possibility of mistake, here is no room for cavil or dispute; and remember, that system of faith, the effects of which are most conspicuous in reforming the lives of its disciples, in producing righteousness, temperance, sobriety, industry, and regularity of life, will ever have the advantage over all its adversaries, and must be victorious in the end.

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I am, however, far from asserting, that the forms of religion are destitute of influence on the moral conduct of men. I am far from wishing to apologize for the errors of the Roman Catholic persuasion. There are some of its tenets absurd and unsupported by Scripture, some of them dangerous to the common rights of mankind; I will add, that some of those tenets, which it formerly professed, I believe its more enlightened members are now heartily ashamed of. It is doubtless for the interests of mankind that its progress should be resisted.— But how is it to be resisted? not by the fire-brands of popular fury. Not by that severity, that intolerant spirit, which we so justly blame in them! Let us, I intreat you, not rashly condemn, before we have investigated the subject; nor, through fear of a shadow, commit real injustice. Let us, in the first place, have undoubted evidence of the increase of Popery; let us accurately compare the proselytes they have made, with the members

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they have lost; and then let us apply in a decent and an orderly manner to our legislature, like men, and like Christians.

Civil violence is the most dreadful of all expedients. It rarely atchieves its end; and in itself it includes every evil to be dreaded in the very worst state of society. The disease, therefore, must be very desperate indeed, when men of any degree of prudence will have recourse to such a remedy. Rashness has one never-failing attendant, and that is remorse. Unless with reason and temper you undertake alterations, you may destroy what you mean to improve. Seated upon the ruins of that most excellent fabric, THE CONSTITUTION, you may hereafter deplore what you then will not be able to remedy. You may exclaim with the prophet: *Who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou dost? Even thy brethren, and the house of thy father have dealt treacherously with thee: yea, they have called a multitude after thee. Many pas-*
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ers have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. Study, therefore, my brethren, rather to make yourselves good and practical Christians, than zealous disputants or polemics : and let the imbecillity of the human faculties be a further argument.—You think yourself in the right : but remember, he whom you condemn thinks himself right as well as you. Speculative errors we have the utmost reason to believe will meet with ample indulgence ; but a neglect of the duties of a Christian will not be overlooked. “ The things to be done are many, the things to be believed are few :” and of so little value, in the sight of GOD, are those opinions which have too frequently set the world in flames, that the questions at the last great day will all respect our actions, and none of them our particular tenets or systems of belief. *When I was naked, did you clothe me? When I was hungry, did you give me meat? When I was sick and in prison, did you*

visit me? When I was a stranger, did you take me in? Whoever can answer then with confidence at the judgement-seat of CHRIST, in whatever sect or party, education, weakness, prejudice may have enrolled him, need not despair of acceptance and salvation at the throne of Grace. To obey is better than sacrifice; and why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

ON THE LAWFULNESS AND EXPEDIENCY OF
INOCULATION FOR THE SMALL-POX. *

MARK III. 4.

*Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-days, or
to do evil? to save life, or to kill?*

THIS very rational reproof, extorted from our blessed Saviour by the bigotry of his countrymen in a particular instance, may not improperly be applied to all those, whose false notions of religion would extend its influence beyond its pro-

* The following sermon was preached at St. Nicolas' church, in Liverpool, on the 17th of March, 1782, at the request of the magistrates, who, by the desire of the faculty, had undertaken to patronize a plan for the general inoculation of the poor. The sermon was afterwards published, and is, I believe, to be had, with a letter from the author of "Domestic Medicine" annexed, at Law's, in Ave-Maria Lane, price 6d.

per jurisdiction; who would condemn, without consideration, actions in themselves indifferent, nay in a moral view laudable; who would make a crime of self-preservation. The words, I have just now cited, point out, in my opinion, the only safe mode of judging where there is no express prohibition, and human reason is left to decide:——*Is it lawful to do good, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill?*

We are of necessity very ignorant in what concerns the divine government of the world. We can have but a very partial view of the designs of Omnipotence. The contemplation involves a chain of causes too great, too many, and too far extended for our comprehension, were it even possible for us to approach the sources of this knowledge. We have indeed a general view of the greatness of the wisdom and power of the ALMIGHTY. We see that *he hangeth the earth upon nothing; that he bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; that he saith to the snow, be thou on the earth, likewise*

wise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength; that he bringeth low and lifteth up; he killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. Human

presumption, in speculating too nicely on this subject, has been the most fertile source that ever supplied misguided zeal with sophistry to perplex the common sense of mankind. Men make a Providence of their own, and, on the same plan, consciences of their own; at these unjust tribunals, and by this false criterion, must every truth be tried; no wonder, if the decisions are often arbitrary, in contradiction to reason, experience, nay, the voice of Scripture itself. Two erroneous conclusions of this kind, it is proper to notice: first, —

“ Because the CREATOR has appointed the course of nature in all things for the best,” it has been suggested, “ that his ordinances are sinfully invaded by the inventions of men.” Not unlike to this, and little removed from the gloomy doctrine of PRE-DESTINATION, is the notion, “ that, since

the care of the divine Providence is over all his works, since we are enjoined to *put our trust in God*, we are therefore to place no dependance upon human means, and little or no endeavours are expected on our part." Both these errors I shall attempt to examine, and, by the same tenor of argument, both may be replied to.

The order of Providence surely cannot be invaded, while a creature acts up to the ends of his nature. Through the different ranks of being we discern something like a gradual ascent from inanimate matter, constrained by uniform and certain laws, to that freedom and spontaneity of action, which distinguishes the thinking part of the creation. The moon and stars observe their stated periods. *He hath set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.* Returning spring revives the verdure of the fields; and, confined to the exertion of a few faculties, and those directly serving to the continuation

tion of the species, animal nature exists without variety or change of sentiment, without foresight or reflection. But man has been in a much higher degree the object of his CREATOR'S bounty. The rude, inactive clod, of which he was formed, was ennobled by *breathing into his nostrils the breath of life*. He is not, like the vegetable kingdom, riveted to a spot of earth, and subjected to a process almost mechanical, from the commencement to the termination of his existence. He is elevated far above the instinctive propensities of the beasts of the field. He is made capable of a variety of intellectual enjoyments. He is appointed, in a great measure, the disposer of his own conduct; possessed of a portion of the divine liberty, and enlightened by a ray of the divine wisdom to guide and direct him. These powers in the latter are as much the ordinance of Providence, as the laws of matter in the former. If GOD had not intended we should use these powers, he would not have imparted them to us; in
 whatever

whatever cases they were liable to be abused, he would have warned us, either by speaking to our understandings in his holy Scriptures, or no less forcibly to our outward senses by the natural and apparent consequences.

That the care of the ALMIGHTY *is over all his works*, will not admit of dispute. We are taught *to put our whole trust and confidence in God*. And it must be confessed, we meet with such precepts in Scripture, as — *Be careful for nothing; take no thought for the morrow, neither for your life; what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall drink, neither for the body, what ye shall put on*. We are assured, *that the hairs of our head are all numbered;— That not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father*. But, who does not see, that these expressions are to be understood with some limitation? To encourage indolence or presumptive hope, could never be the design of him, who imparted to us these faculties, certainly with an intent, that they should be made
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use of. The words I have quoted can be meant only to encourage a reasonable trust and dependance on the Supreme Being; some of them perhaps applicable chiefly to the first professors of the Gospel, who might expect even miraculous assistance, when the cause they were engaged in demanded it, and in whom an attention to the little cares of this life would have been an obstruction to their great work, the conversion of a world.

The present life is a compound of evil and good. We are enjoined to avoid the one and pursue the other; which injunctions would be absurd, were not some endeavours expected on our own part. What was man's condition in a state of innocence we are in a great measure ignorant; of this we are certain, that a degree of evil is very properly connected with the state of probation we are now placed in: it reduces our pride; it instructs us in patience; it lessens the love of life, which would otherwise be immoderate; it, in fine, exercises our faculties,

ties, and calls forth to action all the human powers. Man thus surrounded with evil and good, if the fruits of the earth invite his taste, it requires an effort to gratify his appetite, and no less to avoid a precipice or fly from the serpent's bite. Unless the actions of man be supposed to flow from the determination of his own will, he cannot be looked upon as that accountable being, who is to be answerable for all his doings, *whether they be good, or whether they be evil.* That portion of freedom, which is proper for man in what respects the moral world, we see actually exercised by him in what respects the natural world. Nor is he frequently accused of counteracting Providence, while he makes universal nature subservient to his pleasure and caprice. If God's general providence, and what are called *the laws of nature* be the same, then surely the decrees of Providence are continually violated by the inventions of men. The use of cloathing, and the laboured preparations of food, the arts of navigation,

navigation, of manufactures, and the whole science of medicine, are apparently taking things out of the hand of GOD, and disposing them in an order contrary to that, in which nature has arranged them. The truth is, man was originally formed for invention and action. — *The Lord placed the man in the midst of the garden, to dress and to keep it.* The circumstances attending his fall seem to have rendered these exertions still more necessary.

To apply these principles more immediately to the matter under our present consideration. A most effectual preservative has been discovered from the fatal effects of an alarming disease; but the too tender consciences of a few superstitious persons interpose to rob them of its benefits. “We tempt GOD,” say they, “by voluntarily bringing on a disease which we might possibly have escaped; we throw ourselves in the way of danger; we distrust the providence of ALMIGHTY GOD, who is all-sufficient to deliver us.” These words have indeed

deed the appearance and the voice of piety,
 but they have nothing else. There are few
 of the actions of life, to which the objec-
 tion might not more or less apply. In
 what has the GOD of nature more apparent-
 ly set a limit to the aspiring genius of man,
 than by circumscribing him with the ocean,
 as with a fence, which to pass must ever be
 an undertaking of much hazard and diffi-
 culty? With what plausibility might it be
 alleged, that Providence has assigned to
 each order of beings its proper element,
 and which therefore it must be impiety to
 desert? Fishes, they might add, do not
 presume to traverse the land; or contend for
 the empire of the sky. Tell me, does he
 not tempt GOD, who leaves the blessings of
 his native soil, exposes himself to the fury
 of tempests, to the war of elements, to the
 rigour of climates, where every breath of
 air is charged with pestilence and destruc-
 tion? Yet the man would be deservedly
 ridiculed, who on these grounds would con-
 demn the uses of commerce. Custom has
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worn off whatever was offensive in the action, has reconciled us to what, no doubt, would be at first esteemed a violation of nature's law; and the benefit it extends to the community at large is an argument on which we may safely ground the belief, that it is not contrary to the will of God. To multiply instances would be tedious. An apprehended mortification, which yet by some chance may not take place, renders it prudent that I should lose a limb: this, without considering the hazard of life, is in itself a loss, a mutilation of our Maker's image, is attended with insufferable pain. By the very operation I lose my life, which perchance I might not have lost but for my over-caution. This is a case that may happen; yet no man in his senses will dispute, that the practice of amputation is salutary on the whole, and that for one lost by such operations, at least twenty lives are preserved to the community. You apprehend a disease coming upon you, and you take a medicine by way of prevention, from
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which you can foresee no ill effects; yet this very medicine, unseasonably applied, may be the sole occasion of an untimely death. This may happen from the simplest medicines, or even from an alteration in our manner of living, from the use of the bath, or from exercise improperly taken; yet certainly to disuse these remedies altogether would be indiscretion, if not madness. If, when means are offered, we indolently sit still, and only call on Providence, without an inclination to help ourselves, we shall find our impiety, I may safely call it, deservedly its own punishment. Like the visionary, who expects a miracle to snatch him from beneath the tottering fabric, or looks for a suspension of the laws of gravitation, we shall fall the unpitied victims of our own superstition.* And, though the means, we make use of to avoid evil, should not in every case succeed,

- “ When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
- “ Shall gravitation cease if you go by ?”

ESSAY ON MAN.

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yet, where the chances are manifestly in our favour, common sense points out, that such method ought to be pursued.

The deaths by the natural small-pox are generally allowed to be in the proportion of *one* in *six*, in *seven* at the very least, but oftener *one* in *five*. Now, I suppose, it will be thought moderate, if I say, that not above *one* in *forty* escape having the distemper during the course of their lives. Observe then, in the first place, there are *thirty-nine* to *one* against your escaping the infection; and then you have only *five* chances to *one* in your favour, that you escape with your life. The whole chances therefore in your favour are but FIVE and ONE FORTIETH, or SIX at most; whereas, by authentic accounts of the late general inoculation in this town, it appeared that out of FOUR HUNDRED and SIXTEEN only ONE died.* On other occasions, the proportion

* It has been intimated to the author, that there appears, by the parish-registers, a sensible decrease in infant-burials for the last half-year.

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has been found to be *one in five hundred*. A risk scarcely to be accounted such, when we consider what different constitutions must exist among such a number of patients, and the strong probability of the death of full that number, among so many infants, from other disorders, if inoculation had been entirely out of the question.

The whole force of the objection, I am now combating, will be found to rest on the possibility of the person's escaping the disease, if left to himself: this I have shewn to be forty to one against him. And, after all, it is a circumstance, in my mind, hardly to be wished: such a life must be a life of terror and anxiety, it may cause the neglect of the most important concerns, and many an hour must be embittered by the dread of so fatal a disease. Nor are such apprehensions ill founded, when we reflect that, though he escape for the present, the security is but very frail that he will always escape; it may seize him in maturer age, when experience convinces

us that the danger is almost double ; it may seize him at a time, when he is totally unprepared for it ; at a time, when he wants the care and attention of a parent's eye ; among strangers, or in indigence. He may be cut off in the flower of his life, with perhaps an infant family, depending on him for support. Shall we call it tenderness, shall we call it justice in a parent, that reserves a darling child for such hazards as these ?

After all, an ill-judged fondness is predominant, and this part of the objection is hardly to be surmounted. “ Granting the danger of inoculation to be, as it must be confessed it is, very trifling indeed, — What if, notwithstanding, out of this five hundred, or whatever number, I am to be the unfortunate person ? How shall I answer it to myself, if my child should die ? ” But, how will you answer it to yourself, if, rejecting this opportunity, it should be seized with the distemper in the natural way, and (which you will remember is just *one hundred*

times more probable) DIE? "But, that will happen by the hand of GOD." How do you presume to charge the fault on GOD, when it was in your power to have preserved it? Perhaps you would just say the same thing, if it had died of a fever, and you had neglected to administer the ordinary remedies. In these cases it is our duty to do what appears most reasonable, on estimating the chances both for and against us; we may then safely, *having done all that was required of us*, commit the event to Providence. If he think fit, out of so large a number, to make me, or my child a particular exception to the general course of his mercy, it is my part to conclude that infinite Wisdom and Goodness did not act without an end: *It is good for me* (says the Psalmist) *that I have been in trouble*; and *I know that thou, out of very faithfulness, hast caused me to be afflicted*. Perhaps it may lessen the regret, in an unfortunate event of this kind, to know, that there is a probability, that the patient, who dies under inoculation,

inoculation, would not have survived the distemper in the natural way. Nay, possibly, the fatally-disposing cause might exist in the constitution even till a remote period, and the whole chance of escape depend on that very improbable one, never taking the infection at all.

Humanity and parental tenderness would perhaps dictate another argument on this occasion. It is not only, that the hazard is so astonishingly less, but the person inoculated is exempted from much bodily suffering. Whoever has had an opportunity of seeing some miserable objects under the oppression of this disease, will easily feel the force of this motive. The little trouble and expence will, perhaps, make something in the scale of argument. Observe the family, of which any branch is affected with the natural small-pox; observe the anxiety and confusion, the fear and distress on every turn of the distemper: compare this with the cheerfulness, the composure of the family, nay of the patient himself,

whilst under inoculation; he scarcely suffers either pain or sickness, business is not interrupted, nor is he by any means debarred the enjoyment of pleasure.

In few words, GOD gave us reason and invention, to enable us, under him, to be benefactors to ourselves, if I may be allowed the expression, as well as to others. On any point, which is left undecided by revelation, we can only judge of its conformity to the will of GOD, by the general success: what is plainly proved on the whole to be for the good of mankind, can never be contrary to the divine will. *Is it lawful to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?* We know, that there is nothing in Scripture, which even remotely tends to discountenance our making use of any method similar to inoculation, provided it be done for self-preservation. *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,* was one of the first commands of GOD; instead, therefore, of looking upon it as a violation of the law of Providence, I esteem the discovery

very as no less than a communication from the merciful Author of our being, for the benefit of his creatures. And I can call it by no other name, than a criminal infatuation, a most pernicious obstinacy, which determines to oppose a practice warranted by so many successful trials; a practice submitted to by almost EVERY CROWNED HEAD IN CHRISTENDOM and by EVERY PERSON OF RANK in this kingdom; a practice universally approved by the learned, and discommended by no person, who has a right understanding of religion.

I have heard of other objections, not indeed religious, but which, nevertheless, deserve consideration. It has been said, that inoculation, more frequently than the natural small-pox, leaves other distempers behind it. The assertion is a direct absurdity in theory as well as experience. It might be alleged with almost equal reason, that a slight cold is attended with worse consequences to the constitution than the violence of a fever. Whatever racks and

disorders most the human frame, must weaken most the system, must leave the worst effects, and dispose it most to the attacks of disease. General experience supports this assertion, and justifies a conclusion directly opposite to the objection. —

DEFORMITY OF FEATURE, LOSS OF EYE-SIGHT, GENERAL INFIRMITY, and A TRAIN OF NERVOUS DISORDERS are the common consequences of the natural small-pox. Look among those, on the other hand, who have been inoculated, and you will not, I will venture to affirm, find *one in fifty*, who have suffered any, the least, consequential inconvenience. Similar to this, and not less formidable, is a common objection, “that other diseases may be ingrafted by inoculation.” In answer, I beg leave to observe, first, That the possibility of the thing has been positively denied by some physicians of the greatest eminence. Secondly, That, admitting the possibility, the diseases, which could be so communicated, are so few, that there is
little

little danger on that account: I do not recollect above two diseases in this country, that could be so taken. Thirdly, It is a question, whether, if this be possible in inoculation, there be not equal danger when the infection is caught in the natural way.* Fourthly, It is at the worst an objection, as yet, only in theory, for I know of no well-authenticated instance to countenance the supposition. And lastly, the well-known caution of the faculty in this respect, notwithstanding the great improbability, is sufficient to obviate every fear. As to what has been sometimes said of the possibility of receiving the infection a second time, it having been contradicted by so many actual experiments, I esteem it altogether unworthy of notice; and shall,

* If the opinion of some of the faculty be true, that the disease can only be communicated by actual contact, the force of this observation will be easily seen. In short, equal or greater danger seems to accompany many of the common actions of life, such as drinking out of the same cup, &c.

therefore,

therefore, content myself, on the best authorities, with flatly denying the fact.

Wicked and malicious men are seldom at a loss for a slander to lessen or obscure the merit of the most benevolent undertakings; and, it is to be lamented, that the passions of the multitude are in this respect but too easily imposed on. There never yet was a charitable institution for the preservation of the health of the poor, to which bad men were not ready to object, "that the chief purpose was (as they term it) to enable the medical profession to make experiments." Give me leave to caution you against such insinuations, and to assure you, they are not your friends, who suggest them. Were there men of that profession wicked enough to encourage such an idea, (which I hope there are not,) yet it would be almost impossible to put it in execution. They are, not only under the jealous inspection of one another, but generally under that of other men of public spirit and humanity; and their dearest reputation

putation and interests depend upon their conduct. In the present instance, it is out of the question to make new trials. The round of treatment has been so long established, and so very successful, as to require, almost to admit, no improvement; and is withal so simple, that in most cases it might be practised by any uninformed person without incurring danger.* The plan now in agitation for the inoculation of the poor, has, I think I may venture to say, met with the approbation of every humane, and every rational person; it has been spiritedly entered into by the medical profession in this town, who, barely to do them justice, have in no part of the world been outdone in disinterested virtue, charity, and activity in the public service.

* A private gentleman in Liverpool, without any medical knowledge, successfully inoculated all his own children; and I knew a clergyman in Scotland, who, I was told, inoculated a considerable number of his parishioners, all without any previous preparation, and all with the most happy effects.

To

To conclude.—Let me entreat, that you, who are parents, will afford these arguments mature and candid consideration. If they appear conclusive, it is unnecessary to tell you what it will be your duty to do. I pity the infatuated parent, who may still retain a superstitious fear; but in him, who is REALLY CONVINCED, neglect of this opportunity will be a crime of the blackest dye. Should his child be seized with the infection and perish, while, through INDOLENCE, INDIFFERENCE, or any WORSE MOTIVE, he has omitted to attempt its preservation, what can we deem it short of DELIBERATE MURDER? * A harsh word, but I appeal to the tender parent to justify the expression. There is no need to tell you the curse that awaits on such a con-

* I fear too many instances might be produced of the indifference of parents to the safety and welfare of their offspring, not only in this, but in other respects; it is to such unnatural parents this severe reproof is addressed; the author means not to wound the feelings of the timid or the weak, but to awake, if possible, a sense of duty in the careless and unfeeling.

duct.

duct. Even in this life you may feel its effects. *Children and the fruit of the womb are an heritage and a gift that cometh of the Lord.* You may lose the comfort and support of your latter years. You do an injury to your country. You transgress the ordinances of your Maker, who has enjoined that every gift, which he has imparted to us, should be made use of for our own preservation, and that of our helpless infant descendants. With this exhortation, therefore, I dismiss the subject; only requesting you to bear in mind, that by omitting to inoculate, you leave your child at the risk of only six chances to ONE at the very most; whereas, on inoculation, the chances in his favour, by the most rigorous calculation, are at least FOUR HUNDRED.

An

AN EXHORTATION,

Delivered occasionally on SATURDAY, at the
LIVERPOOL INFIRMARY.*

TO-morrow being the Lord's day, when my public duties will render it impossible for me to attend you here, as usual; I have chosen this opportunity to address to you a few words, explaining the purpose of our assembling here every day, and the nature of that worship, which I fear is too often performed without a real sense of its necessity and importance.

Most of you here present have lately felt, or do at this moment feel, the afflicting

* This Exhortation was printed and distributed to the patients by the governors of that charity. It is reprinted in this volume merely on the consideration, that it might possibly prove of service on some similar occasion: should the governors or chaplains, therefore, of any public hospital be of that opinion, they have the author's full permission to make what use of it they please.

hand

hand of Providence; but you are not to consider this as the vengeance of an angry GOD: nothing could be so contrary to his nature, who is all goodness, and designs every thing for our good. Some of the misfortunes, under which you now labour, may probably be the effects of your sins, and wholesome chastisements intended to bring back your wandering thoughts and affections to the path of grace and virtue; or they may be trials of your patience, and perhaps intended to keep up a proper sense of your dependance upon the ALMIGHTY, which in the hour of prosperity we are but too apt to forget.

Either way, you are to believe them meant for your good, and it depends only on yourselves to turn them to more profit than all *that the world can bestow*; since, if made a proper use of, they may insure your eternal salvation.

To this end, there is one first and indispensibly necessary step; that is, reforming your past errors, resolving to lead a new
life

life of virtue, honesty, religion : these you must prize above sensual enjoyments or the possession of wealth, remembering that AN ETERNITY OF HAPPINESS OR MISERY LIES BEFORE YOU ! It will be well, therefore, here, in the awful presence of ALMIGHTY GOD, to make a solemn resolution, that, if it shall be his good pleasure to restore you to your former health, you will hereafter carefully abstain from all those actions, which are displeasing to him, and which he has prohibited by his express commands ; from drunkenness and bad company, which last is indeed generally the root of all evil ; from immorality and profaneness of every kind, particularly from that odious and least profitable of vices, *common swearing* ; and no less from *lewd* and *indecent* language ; from anger and tumultuous passions ; from envy and covetousness ; from adultery, lewdness, and fornication ; and more especially, because these tend to a life of universal debauchery, and most certainly lead on to theft, murder, and every

X

crime,

crime, *the end of which things is death : —*
Death often in this world, by the just sentence of the law, and, what is more to be dreaded, an eternal death in another. Above all, honesty and justice must be ever present in your thoughts. You are not to injure another in word or in deed ; but, *whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, so do unto them ; for, this is the law and the prophets.*

These are the first outlines of a religious life. There is no difficulty in reducing them to practice ; and, without them, there is no gaining pardon or acceptance with GOD.

That you may want no incitement to religion and virtue, the charitable institution, which has provided so liberally for the health of your bodies, has ordered divine service to be performed here every day. Now I must observe to you, that, although worship is such a duty as is naturally owing to him, who is the dispenser of every good thing we enjoy, and in whose hand is either
happiness

happiness or misery, yet prayer has another end, namely, *our own instruction*, and to maintain in us a proper sense of morality and justice : and it is certain, *that worship only*, which brings improvement to our own hearts, which tends to make us good men, and the effects of which are seen in our practice, is enjoined by GOD, or can be approved by HIM.

It behoves you, therefore, while present at the reading of prayers, to have your minds intent on the great business you are then engaged in, to weigh every sentence : for, every sentence has a meaning.— When you confess your sins, you are not repeating a vague, unmeaning form of words, your heart, your soul, every nerve must feel. — You are speaking to him, who already knows your thoughts, and you only now make confession of your faults to shew that you are sensible of them. It is not a general acknowledgement of the weakness of your nature that will serve, “ That you have left undone those things which you

ought to have done, &c.”—At that moment *every secret crime, every guilty action* you have ever been concerned in, must stare you in the face, and upbraid you with disobedience. You must, as I before intimated, when you pray to the ALMIGHTY for his assistance to enable you to lead a “godly, righteous, and sober life,” make a secret vow in your own breasts, to put forth every endeavour yourselves : and remember the consequence of slighting such vows, and made on such an occasion. If you do not this, you are performing a MOCK WORSHIP, and perhaps it were almost as well you had staid away. It must not be inferred from this, that you are at liberty to omit this duty ; *wilful neglect*, when we have opportunity, is an inexcusable crime.

The minister, indeed, reads you a form of absolution, but this is of no avail to *the purging away of sin* ;—it is a bare declaration, “ That he (that is, GOD) pardoneth and absolveth all them that *truly repent*,” and that is shewn, when “ the rest of our life proves
pure

pure and holy." — You can, therefore, look for pardon on no other conditions than what I at first remarked, namely, a sincere, practical repentance, that is, an immediate reformation of your lives.

Let the same pious spirit be continued through the rest of the prayers; that, when you ask for good things at the hand of GOD, you sincerely resolve to use your own endeavours to merit them; and, when you repeat the general thanksgiving, let it be as if you really felt how unworthy you are, and how grateful for the many blessings you enjoy. Among the rest, take care not to forget those which are extended to you by this very excellent and benevolent institution. Take care not to forget, that many of you have been delivered out of the very jaws of death, by the goodness of Providence, and the charitable interference of the humane. That the all-powerful arm, which has once afflicted you, may do so again; but that to secure his favour, is to secure life, happiness, and every thing desirable.

firable. May the same means, that have rescued you from temporal death, rescue you from the *death of sin*, by impressing you with a just idea of what you are, and what you ought to be! — While you are thankful for these blessings, let the first-fruits of your increasing goodness be shewn in a temperate and uniform obedience to the rules and regulations of the house, and to those who exercise authority in it for your benefit; and in a cheerful compliance with whatever means the skilful persons, who bestow their care and attendance upon you, shall judge conducive to your recovery. — And may GOD give you grace so to take both his visitations and blessings, that you may live to his glory and your own happiness, and that you may inherit life everlasting, through the merits of JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD!

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THE END.

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